

Sentimental Swordsman, Ruthless Sword

Gu Long

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(多情劍客無情劍 / Duō Qíng Jiàn Kè Wú Qíng Jiàn)

By Gu Long

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Chapter 1: Flying Dagger vs. Quick Sword

The cold wind act as a knife, using the ground as the cutting board, and people as fish meat.

The snowstorm extends for thousands of miles, making everything seem like bright white silver.

In this cold winter snowstorm, a horse carriage came from the north. It's wheels shattered the snow on the ground, but cannot shatter loneliness in the world.

Li Xun Huan yawned, trying to stretch his legs. The inside of the carriage might be quite comfortable, but this trip is just way too long, too lonely. He not only feel exhausted, but also irritated. He feels that loneliness is the biggest annoyance in his life, yet loneliness frequently accompanies him.

A person's life is usually filled with contradictions. No one can do anything about this.

Li Xun Huan sighed and took out a wine bottle. As he's drinking the wine, he also begin to cough. His continuous coughing made his pale face appear very sick, as if fire from Hell is burning his flesh and soul.

The wine bottle's empty now, so he grabbed a little dagger and start to carve a wooden human figure. The dagger's thin and sharp, his hand is long and powerful.

The figure is that of a woman, so beautiful and warm

under his masterful carving, looks so full of life.

He not only gave her a striking look, but also gave her life and soul, only because his life and soul is already quietly disappearing under the tip of the dagger.

He's no longer young.

Wrinkles filled the corners of his eyes, every wrinkle filled with all the joy and sadness in his life. Only his eyes are young.

This is a strange pair of eyes, a shade of green, similar to the Spring wind blowing on the Willow leaves, warm and flexible. Or similar to the sea water under the Summer sun's light, filled with energy.

Maybe it's only because of this pair of eyes that allowed him to live til today.

The wooden figure is finally finished. He mindlessly stared at this figure, not knowing for how long, and then pushed the carriage door open, jumping out.

The carriage driver immediately stopped the horses.

This carriage driver's eyes are sharp like a eagle, but as those eyes looked at Li Xun Huan, they immediately became warm, filled with loyalty and sympathy. Like a beast looking at its master.

Li Xun Huan dug a hole on the ground, burying the figure he just carved into that hole. Then he just mindlessly stared at the pile of snow where he buried the figure.

His fingers have now been frozen, his face red from the cold, and snowflakes covered his whole body. Yet he does not feel the cold. The item buried under the snow is like

the most important person in his life. As he buried "her", his own life also became filled with emptiness.

Any other person would find this event to be quite strange, yet the carriage driver is already used to all this. He only said, "It's almost dark. We still have a long road ahead. Please come back onto the carriage, young master."

Li Xun Huan turned around, finding that there is one set of footprints besides the carriage, coming alone from the far north, going ahead alone.

The footprints are quite deep, showing that this person has walked very much, is very fatigued, yet still would not stop to rest.

Li Xun Huan took a deep breath, said, "I can't believe there's someone who will travel in a place like this in this kind of weather. I think he must be a very lonely, very sorrowful person.

The carriage driver didn't say anything, only sighing in his heart, thinking, "Aren't you also a very lonely, sorrowful person? Why do you only sympathize other people, but forget yourself?"

There's a lot more Pine wood under the carriage seat, so Li Xun Huan begin to carve yet again. His technique is now excellent with so much practice, because what he's carving will forever be that one single person.

This person not only filled all of his heart, but also all of his body.

The snowstorm finally stopped, but the coldness only got heavier, the loneliness thicker. Good thing the wind also carried the sound of a person's footsteps.

Although this sound is much softer than the horses, it is the sound Li Xun Huan has been searching for. So no matter how soft it is, it cannot escape Li Xun Huan's ears.

As he pulled up the drapes of the carriage's window, he saw the shadow of that lonely person walking in front.

This person walks very slowly, yet does not stop. Although he heard the horses, he still does not turn around to look. He has neither an umbrella nor a hat. The melted ice and snow dropped from his face to his neck. He only has a single piece of thin clothing.

Yet he still held his head high, as if he's made of steel. Snow, coldness, exhaustion, fatigue, hunger, all cannot conquer him.

Nothing can conquer him.

It's only as the carriage passed him that Li Xun Huan saw his face.

His eyebrows are thick, eyes very big, thin tight lips made a line, a straight nose that also made his face look even thinner.

This face reminds one very easily of stones in a flower pot, strong, rigid, cold, as if nothing matters, not even himself.

Yet this is also the most handsome face Li Xun Huan has ever seen in his life, although it's a bit young, a bit immature, it also already contains a very magnetic personality.

Within Li Xun Huan's eyes seems to exist a smile. He opened the carriage door, saying, "Come into the carriage. I'll take you on the next part of your journey."

His words has always been short and simple, filled with energy, in this seemingly endless snowfield, no one in the world would reject his offer.

Who could've possibly imagine that this youngster would not even look at him, his footsteps not even slowed down, as if he never even heard talking.

Li Xun Huan asks, "Are you deaf?"

The youngster's hand suddenly grabbed the sword from his waist. Although his hand is already frozen, his movement is still quick and fluid.

Li Xun Huan laughed, saying, "I guess you're not deaf after all. Then come in and have a drink. A sip of wine will not hurt anyone!"

The youngster quickly replied, "I can't afford it."

He could actually say something like this! Even the wrinkles on the side of Li Xun Huan's eyes seem to have a smile on them, but he did not smile, instead said, "I'm inviting you for some wine, not selling you wine."

The youngster responded, "If it's not something I bought with my own money, I'll never take it. If it's not wine that I bought with my own money, I'll never drink it. Have I made myself clear enough?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Clear enough."

The youngster said, "Good, you can go now."

Li Xun Huan thought for a while, suddenly said with a smile, "Ok. I'll go, but when you can afford to buy wine, will you invite me for a drink?"

The youngster stared at him a bit, then said, "Alright, I'll invite you."

Li Xun Huan started to laugh as his horse carriage sped away, until it can no longer see the youngster. Li Xun Huan laughingly asked, "Have you see such a strange kid before? I thought he must be a wise person, yet his words are just so innocent, so honest."

The carriage driver responded, "He's just a very strong-willed kid, that's all."

Li Xun Huan asked, "Did you see that sword on his waist?"

A hint of a smile also appeared on the driver's face. "That can even be considered a sword?"

In the strictest sense, that really cannot be considered a sword, it's just a one meter long strip of metal. It contains no sharp tip, no sword cover, just two pieces of wood nailed onto a metal, which can be considered the handle.

The driver continued with a smile, "The way I see it, it's just a child's toy."

This time not only did Li Xun Huan not smile, he even sighed, saying, "The way I see it, this toy is incredibly dangerous. It's best to not play with it."

The hotel in this little town is not big, but is full of people trapped by the heavy snowstorm, making the place incredibly crowded.

In the courtyard are numerous empty carriages of escort service. On the east side is the escort service's flag, flapping loudly as the wind whistles by, making people

unable to make out whether the design is that of a tiger or a lion.

At the little restaurant in the hotel, a big man with a sheepskin coat constantly went in and out. Sometimes after a few drinks, he'd take off his coat, showing that he's not afraid of the cold.

As Li Xun Huan arrived, there are no more empty tables at the restaurant. Yet he's not anxious at all, because he knows that there aren't that many items in this world that can't be bought with money, so he was able to find a table on the corner of the restaurant, asked for some wine, and started to drink slowly.

He does not drink very fast, but he can drink for several days and nights without stopping. He constantly drinks, constantly coughs, and the day gradually became dark.

The driver came in, standing behind him saying, "The room on the south side is empty now, they've cleaned it up, young master can rest at any time now."

Li Xun Huan just nodded. After a while, that driver suddenly added, "The Golden Lion Escort Agency also has people here, as if they are escorting something from the border area.

Li Xun Huan asked, "Really! Who's the main escort?"

The driver answered, "It's the 'Sudden Wind Sword' Zhu Ge Lei."

Li Xun Huan raised his eyebrows, laughingly said, "This geezer can actually lived til today? Not bad at all."

Although he kept talking about the man behind him, his eyes are staring at the front door, as if waiting for

someone.

The driver said, "That kid's not walking very fast. You probably have to wait until midnight before he arrives."

Li Xun Huan laughed, saying, "I don't think it's that he's walking slowly, but rather wants to conserve energy. Have you seen a wolf walking around on the snowfield? If there's no prey in front and no enemies in the back, it's definitely not going to walk very fast. Because it feels that exhausting energy on the road is quite a waste."

The driver also laughed, saying, "But that kid is not a wolf."

Li Xun Huan did not say anything, because at this time, he started coughing again.

Then, he saw three people coming in from the back door, all talking loudly about a story in the martial world, as if they're afraid people won't know they're important people in the Golden Lion Escort Agency.

Li Xun Huan also recognizes that the red-faced fat guy is 'Sudden Wind Sword', but doesn't seem to want that person to recognize him, so he just lowered his head to carve that wooden figure.

Good thing Zhu Ge Lei never looked closely at anybody in this little town. They quickly ordered some food and wine, and began to eat.

Unfortunately, the food and the wine did not shut their mouths. After a few drinks, Zhu Ge Le became even more arrogant, laughing loudly. "Number two, do you remember that time under Tai Xing mountain when we met 'The Four Tigers of Tai Xing'?"

The other guy smiled. "How can I forget? That time 'The Four Tigers of Tai Xing' were brave enough to come take our escorted items, even said something like 'If you Zhu Ge Lei just crawl on the floor, we'll let you pass. Otherwise not only do you leave the items, but also your head.' "

The third person also laughed loudly. "Who would've thought that while their sabers haven't finished the strike, big brother you has already cut off their heads."

The second person said, "He's not trying to brag. When it comes to the power of palms, the best is obviously the head of our agency, 'Golden Lion Palm'. But when it comes to sword skill, there's probably no one better than our big brother here."

Zhu Ge Lei laughs as he raised his cup, but suddenly his laugh stopped, as the cover of the baggage besides him suddenly was blown by the wind.

Two human shadows appeared.

These two people both have bright red capes with a peculiar mask unique to people living outside the borders. The two people seem to have the same physic, the same height.

The masses might not see their faces, but from their lightness kung fu and outfit, they all unintentionally began to stare at them.

Only Li Xun Huan's eyes are still staring at the door, because as the wind starts to blow the door again, he saw that youngster.

That youngster just stood outside the door, and seems as if he's stood there for a long time, as if he were a savage beast. Although he is yearning for the warmth inside the

hotel and does not want to leave, he's afraid of entering the world of man.

Li Xun Huan gave a light sigh, and only now transferred his attention to those two men. Only to see that these two people have taken off their masks, revealing two ugly faces.

Their ears are small, but noses are big, as if it covered one-third the face, making the eyes and ears seem really far apart.

But their eyes revealed evil, like the eyes of a rattlesnake.

Then, they took off their capes, revealing a black shirt. It seems as if their body also resembles that of a snake, thin and long, and can strike at any moment. Making people not only scared, but also disgusted.

These two people looked very similar, except one face looks white, while the other looks black. Their movements are slow, taking off their cape, folding it, and walked slowly to the counter. Then they walked in front of Zhu Ge Lei.

It became so quiet in the restaurant that people can even hear Li Xun Huan carving the figure.

Zhu Ge Lei pretended that he didn't see these two people, but failed.

Those two people also stared at him, those eyes like an oil brush, brushing Zhu Ge Lei from top to bottom.

Zhu Ge Lei can only stand and ask, "May I ask the names of the two gentleman, please? Excuse me for not recognizing."

The white faced man suddenly said, "So you're 'Sudden Wind Sword' Zhu Ge Lei?"

His voice is sharp, and there seems to be a resonance, like that of a rattlesnake. Zhu Ge Lei is scared out of his wits just listening to the voices. "Y...yes."

The black-faced man laughed coldly. "You deserve to be called 'Sudden Wind Sword'?"

His hand shook, a long, thin, black sword suddenly appeared in his hand.

As the sword pointed at Zhu Ge Lei, he said, "Just leave what you are carrying, and I'll spare your life."

The second guy sitting there suddenly stood up, and said with a smile, "The two gentleman must've made a mistake. On this trip, we escorted our items out to the border, not back in. Our carriages are empty."

Before he can even finish his speech, the sword in the black-faced man entered his neck. With a light flip, the head popped right off.

Everyone is just plain shocked now. Their legs trembling under the tables.

However, since Zhu Ge Lei can live til today, obviously has some real skills. He took out the package under his arms and put it on the table. "Your info is correct. We truly did bring something from the border. But the two of you, unfortunately, do not have the skills to take it away."

The black-faced man laughed. "What do you want to do?"

Zhu Ge Lei responded, "The two gentleman should at least leave some martial skills here, so I can have an excuse

when I get back."

Even as he speaks, his foot has retreated seven steps. The sword came out. And everyone figured he's going to fight to the death.

No one expected him to instead flip a table to his side. The dish is filled with shrimp balls, which went into the air.

After only hearing the 'Si Si' sounds of the sword, seeing the bright light of the sword turning, over ten shrimp balls have all been cut in half.

Zhu Ge Lei said, "If you can do the same thing, I'll immediately hand over the package. Otherwise, please leave."

This sword skill is definitely quite excellent, the words are also very pretty, but Li Xun began to laugh silently. By doing this, his opponents can only slice shrimp balls, not his head. So no matter win or lose, he'll keep his life."

The black-faced man started to laugh. "This can only be considered a chef's specialty. Do you really think it's also martial arts?"

When he said this, he took a deep breath, made the sliced shrimp balls on the floor bounce up again. Then, with only the sight of a black light, the shrimp balls all suddenly disappeared. Apparently, they all got stuck on his sword. Even those with no kung fu realizes how hard it is to slice shrimp balls, but to capture them on a sword is much harder.

Zhu Ge Lei's face suddenly went very pale, because he saw this sword skill, and quietly retreated a few more steps. Saying, "I assume that the two gentlemen are 'The Blood-Stained Twin Snakes'?"

As he heard those words, the third person sitting at the table suddenly got scared out of his wits, quietly trying to crawl away.

Even the carriage driver by Li Xun Huan raised his eyebrows, because he knows that in the past years, very few robbers in the yellow river area can match these two people in terms of skill or ruthlessness. It is rumored that their red capes were stained by the blood of their victims.

But he still has not heard much. Because of the people who actually know what 'The Blood-Stained Twin Snakes' has done, 9 out of 10 had their heads relocated."

Only to hear the black snake laughed, saying, "You can actually recognize us? At least your eyes aren't blind."

Zhu Ge Lei bit his teeth, saying, "Since the two want this package, I guess I can't do anything about it. Just take it and leave."

The white snake suddenly said, "If you're willing to crawl on the floor, we'll let your live. Otherwise, not only do you have to leave your package, but also your head."

This just happens to be the words Zhu Ge Lei said earlier when he was gloating. This time as it comes out of the white-faced man's mouth, every word seem to be cutting like a knife.

Zhu Ge Lei's face turned green, then turned white, then suddenly dropped onto the floor, crawling around his table once.

It's at this moment that Li Xun Huan let out a deep sigh, saying to himself, "I see that this person's personality has changed, no wonder he can live this long.

Although he spoke very softly, the Twin snakes still heard him and turned to look. Yet Li Xun Huan didn't seem to see this, instead concentrating on his human figure.

White snake laughed, "Looks like there's a top kung fu expert here, my brother and I unfortunately did not see it." Black snake said, "This package was given to us out of his own free will. If there's someone whose sword is even faster than ours, we'll also freely give our package to that person."

White snake's hand suddenly shook, and another sword appeared, except this sword is white, saying, "If there's someone sword faster than us, not only will we give up this package, but also our head."

Their eyes are staring at Li Xun Huan as they spoke. Yet Li Xun Huan's simply concentrating on his carving. As if he heard nothing.

Yet someone outside suddenly yelled, "How much is your head worth?"

When he heard this, Li Xun Huan suddenly felt quite surprised, but also very happy. He raised his head, finally seeing the youngster walking into the room.

His clothing are still not fully dry. Some areas even turned into ice, yet he's still standing straight as a spear.

His eyes still look that lonely, that proud.

His eyes contain that wild look which cannot be tamed, as if it can fight at any time, making it hard for people to get close to him.

But everyone's attention is focused on that sword on his waist. When he saw this sword, the white snake suddenly

began to laugh. "Were those words spoken by you?"

The youngster responded, "Yes."

White snake said, "You want to buy my head?"

The youngster responded, "I just want to know how much it's worth, because I want to sell it to you."

White snake gathered himself, saying, "Selling me my own head?"

The youngster said, "Exactly, because not only do I not want this package, but I also do not want your head."

White snake said, "It seems that you simply want to challenge me, then."

"Yes"

White snake looked closely at him, then looked at his sword, suddenly began to laugh hysterically. He's never seen anything so funny in his life.

The youngster just stood there quietly, as if he has no idea what this person's laughing about. He just think that there's nothing funny about what he just said.

The carriage driver sighed, as if he thought this child must be mad, Zhu Ge Lei also thinks that there's something wrong with the youngster's head.

Only to hear white snake said, "Thousands taels of gold would have a hard time buying my head."

The youngster said, "A thousand taels of gold is way too much, I'll only need 50 taels."

White snake suddenly stopped laughing, because he found that the youngster's neither mad nor joking. He then saw that sword again, and started to laugh uncontrollably again. "Ok, if you just do exactly as I do, I'll give you 50 taels."

Within his laughs, he suddenly struck at the candle on the counter. Yet nothing happened to the candle. Everyone was surprised, wondering what's going on. It's at this time that white snake blew at the candle, only to see it split into seven pieces. The sword moved again yet again. Those 7 pieces then got caught up on his sword. Amazingly enough, the fire on the top piece didn't even go out!

White snake arrogantly said, "So do you think my sword is fast enough?"

The youngster's face seems to contain absolutely no emotions, answering, "Very fast."

White snake laughed, "How about you?"

The youngster responded, "My sword is not for cutting candles."

"Then what is your piece of scrap metal for?"

The youngster's hand held the sword, said one word at a time, "My Sword Is For Killing People."

White snake smiled. "Killing people? Who can you kill?"

The youngster said, "YOU!"

Just as the word 'you' came out of his mouth, he struck with his sword!

The sword was originally at the youngster's waist, everyone saw this sword.

Yet in an instant, this sword has already entered the throat of white snake. Everyone saw that this meter long sword cut through white snake's throat.

Yet no one saw just how his sword entered white snake's throat!

There's no blood, because blood hasn't come out yet.

The youngster stared at white snake, saying, "So is your sword faster, or my sword is faster?"

White snake's gave out a 'ge ge' noise. The muscles on his face all trembling. Suddenly his mouth opened, his tongue came out.

Blood came out of his mouth.

Black snake raised his sword, yet dare not to strike. Sweat dropped from his head continuously. His hand trembling.

Only to see the youngster suddenly took out the sword, and blood spilled from the throat of white snake. White snake yelled loudly, "You...".

Afterwards, he fell on the floor.

The youngster turned to black snake, saying, "He lost. Where's my 50 taels?"

He is still that serious. Serious like an innocent child.

Yet this time no one dared to laugh at him.

As he trembles, black snake said, "So you really killed him

for 50 taels of silver?"

"That's correct."

Black snake doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. He suddenly grabbed his own hair, shredded his own cloths as silver came out. He then threw all that silver towards that youngster. "Here, take it. Take all of it!"

He then ran out the door like a mad person.

Not only did that youngster not follow him, he's not even mad. Instead he simply bent down to pick up the silvers, then took them to the manager of the hotel, asking, "Do you think this is 50 taels?"

That manager was already crawling behind the table. Unable to speak. Only nodding his head furiously.

It's only at this time that Li Xun Huan turned his head to the carriage driver, laughing. "I was correct, wasn't I?"

The driver can only sigh. "You're definitely correct. That toy is way too dangerous."

He saw that youngster walking towards them, but couldn't see Zhu Ge Lei. Zhu Ge Lei never got out from under the table.

It's at this time that he finally came out, and he suddenly begin to strike at that youngster from the back!.

His sword is not slow. The youngster also never figured Zhu Ge Lei would try to kill him. He killed white snake. Zhu Ge Lei should be thankful to him. Why kill him?

Just as everyone thought this sword would penetrate the youngster's heart, Zhu Ge Lei suddenly give a loud yell,

his sword left his hand, stuck on the ceiling.

As the sword still springs back and forth on the ceiling, Zhu Ge Lei's hands are already grabbing his own throat. But his eyes are on Li Xun Huan, the eyeballs almost popping out.

Li Xun Huan at this moment is no longer carving. Because the dagger he used to carve the figure is no longer in his hand.

Blood trickled from Zhu Ge Lei's back.

He stared at Li Xun Huan, his throat also giving off a 'ge ge' sound. It's only at this time that people began to understand that Li Xun Huan's carving dagger made its way to Zhu Ge Lei's throat.

Yet no one saw how this dagger got to his throat.

Sweat poured down from Zhu Ge Lei, his face full of pain. Suddenly he bit his teeth, and pulled that dagger out of his throat. Then stared at Li Xun Huan, yelling, "I should've recognized that it was you!"

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Unfortunately, you only found out now, or you never would've attempted to do such a disgraceful act."

Zhu Ge Lei did not hear these words. He'll never be able to hear ever again.

The youngster also turned to take a look, his face full of wonder, as if he'd never understand why this person would to kill him.

But he only looked for an instant, then walked up to Li Xun Huan. Beneath his wild and savage exterior seems to

exist a hint of warmth and smile.

He only said one sentence. "I want to invite you for a drink."

Chapter 2: A Close Friend Stored in the Seas

The horse carriage is now filled with many bottles wine. These wine are bought by that youngster, so he drank them one after another, fully enjoying the taste.

Li Xun Huan looked at him with eyes filled with joy. He rarely finds people he's interested in, but this youngster is incredibly interesting.

The youngster suddenly put down the wine bottle, staring at Li Xun Huan. "Why must you invite me into your carriage for a drink?"

Li Xun Huan laughed. "Because that hotel is not a place we should very long at."

"Why?"

Li Xun Huan replied, "No matter who kills a person, he'll end up in some sort of trouble. While I am not afraid of killing, I despise trouble."

The youngster thought for a moment, then started drinking again. Li Xun Huan smiled as he looked at the youngster, appreciating his look as he drinks.

After a while, the youngster also sighed. "Killing is definitely not a happy thing. But there are people in this world that you just have to kill. So I must kill them!"

Li Xun Huan laughed. "You really killed him for those 50

taels of silver?"

The youngster replied, "Even without the money, I would've still killed him. But having 50 taels of silver is better."

Li Xun Huan asked, "Why do you only ask for 50 taels?"

The youngster responded, "Because that's how much he's worth."

Li Xun Huan smiled. "There are many people in the martial world that should die. And some are worth even more than 50 taels of silver. So later maybe you'll become filthy rich."

The youngster said, "Unfortunately, I'm too poor. Otherwise, I really should give you 50 taels."

"Why?"

"Because you helped me killed that person."

Li Xun Huan laughed heartily. "You're wrong. That person's not worth 50 taels. In fact, he's not even worth a single wen [the lowest form of ancient Chinese currency, like the penny today]."

He suddenly asked, "Do you know why he tried to kill you?"

"No."

"Because although white snake did not kill him, he still made Zhu Ge Lei unable to keep his place in the martial world. You killed white snake. Only by killing you will he be able to regain his position. That's why he must kill you. People in the martial world are devious beyond your

imagination."

The youngster went deeply into his own thoughts. Then said, "Sometimes, a person's heart is much more vicious than that of a tiger. At least when a tiger wants to eat you, he'll let you know first."

He drank another bottle of wine, then continued. "Yet I only hear people say that tigers are vicious, but never hear tigers say that humans are vicious. In reality, tigers only kill to survive. Yet humans can kill for any reason. And from what I know, humans kill a lot more humans than tigers do."

Li Xun Huan looked at him. "That's why you'd rather make friends with a tiger, right?"

The youngster thought a bit more, then suddenly laughed. "The only problem is, they can't drink."

This is the first time Li Xun Huan saw the youngster smile. He never thought a smile could bring such a huge change to a person.

The youngster's face used to be so lonely, so proud, making Li Xun Huan think he's like a wolf in the snow.

Yet when he smiled, his person totally changed. He became so warm, so close, so cute.

Li Xun Huan has never seen anyone's smile can be so charming.

The youngster suddenly asked, "Are you a really famous person?"

Li Xun Huan smiled. "Sometimes, being famous is not a good thing."

"Yet I would wish to become famous. I want to be the most famous person in the world."

The way he said this made him look so innocent.

Li Xun Huan laughed again. "Everyone wants to be famous. You just happen to be a lot more honest than most people."

That youngster said, "I'm different from others, I MUST be famous. If I'm not famous, I'll have to die!"

Li Xun Huan was shocked at this statement. "Why?"

The youngster did not answer this question. Yet one can see the look of incredible pain from his eyes.

It's only at this time that Li Xun Huan sees that this innocent child also has many hidden secrets. His childhood must have brought him much pain and suffering.

Li Xun Huan said in a warm voice, "If you want to be famous, you should at least tell me your name."

The youngster thought for a long time, then responded, "People who know me all call me Ah Fei."

"Ah Fei?"

Li Xun Huan laughed. "So your last name is 'Ah'? There's no one in this world with that last name."

The youngster replied, "I have NO last name!" Much fire appeared in his eyes. Li Xun Huan realizes that not even tears can put out this type of fire. He cannot bear to keep on asking. He never thought that the youngster would

continue to talk. "When I become really famous, I might say my last name, until then..."

Li Xun Huan said in a calm tone. "For now, I'll just call you Ah Fei." The youngster responded, "Very good, you can call me Ah Fei now. Quite frankly, you can call me by whatever name you want."

Li Xun Huan said, "Ah Fei, let's toast."

Just as he finished half a glass, Li Xun Huan started to cough again, his pale face revealed a serious illness. Yet he still finished the rest of the glass.

Ah Fei stared at him strangely, as if wondering how a famous person like him can be in such bad health. Yet he said nothing, just finished his own glass.

Li Xun Huan suddenly smiled. "Do you know why I like you as my friend?"

Ah Fei did not respond, so Li Xun Huan continued. "Because of all my friends, you're the only person to see me cough, yet does not persuade me to stop drinking."

Ah Fei said, "Should you not drink if you cough?"

"In actuality, I shouldn't even touch alcohol."

Ah Fei said, "Then why do you keep drinking? Do you have a very sad past?"

Li Xun Huan's bright eyes dimmed, looking at Ah Fei. "Have I asked you anything you did not wish to answer? Did I ask who your parents were? Who taught you kung fu? Where you're from? Where you're going?"

"No."

"Then why do you ask me?"

Ah Fei quietly sat there. Then smiled. "I won't ask you."

Li Xun Huan also smiled, he seems to want to toast again, but just as he picks up the glass, he started to cough again.

Ah Fei opened the window for him, but suddenly the carriage stopped.

"What happened," Li Xun Huan asked.

The driver said, "There's someone blocking the street."

"Who?"

"A snowman."

They got off the carriage. Li Xun Huan simply just breathed slowly, yet Ah Fei kept staring at the snowman, as if he has never seen a snowman in his life before.

Li Xun Huan looked at him and asked, "You've never seen a snowman before?"

Ah Fei responded. "I just know that snow is terrible. Not only does it bring coldness to people, but also make plants die out, animals hide, people lonely, hungry."

He made a snowball and threw it. The ball landed somewhere far away, broke apart, and disappeared. His eyesight is also looking at a faraway place. "To those who have enough to eat and enough to wear, snow might be very nice. Because not only can they make snowman, but also enjoy the scenery of a snowfield. But to people like me..."

He suddenly stared at Li Xun Huan. "Do you realize that for a person growing up in the wild as I did, wind, snow, hail, and rain are my biggest enemies?"

Li Xun Huan made a snowball too, saying, "I don't hate snow, but I hate others blocking my path."

He threw that snowball at the snowman. Oddly enough, the snowman did not fall down. They only saw the snow break apart, revealing something beneath it.

There's actually a real person inside the snow!

A dead person.

A dead person's face is never pretty, this face is incredibly hideous.

"Black snake!" Ah Fei suddenly yelled.

Why would black snake die here?

Why would the person who killed him put him here as a snowman?

The driver took his body from the snow, examining it closely, trying to find the strike that killed him.

Li Xun Huan asked, "Do you know who killed him?"

Ah Fei answered, "I don't know."

Li Xun Huan said, "It's that package."

"Package?"

Li Xun Huan continued, "That package was always on the

table, so I did not notice it. But when black snake left, that package disappeared. Therefore I thought, he just pretended to be insane, to divert everyone's attention while he leave with the package."

"Ok." Ah Fei said.

"Yet he never would've thought that the package would cause his death. The person who killed him must did so for that package."

No one knew when that dagger made its way back to his hand again. "I wonder what's in that baggage? Why would so many people be so interested in it? Maybe I should've taken a look."

Ah Fei has been listening intently, but suddenly cut in, "If the person killed him for the package, why did they turn him into a snowman to block our paths?"

Li Xun Huan was very surprised. He found that while this youngster does not have much experience in society, innocent as a child. he does have an amazing intellect. Something many experienced people in the martial world cannot even compare.

Ah Fei continued, "That person must've calculated that no one else will travel on this road. Only you. So the snowman here is to block your path."

Li Xun Huan did not respond, but said, "Did you find the lethal wound?"

But before the driver can respond, Li Xun Huan said, "Don't bother."

Ah Fei added, "That's right. Those people are already here, why bother to keep looking?"

Li Xun Huan's hearing and eyesight can be said to have no equal in the world. He really could not believe that this youngster's hearing is just as good.

This youngster seems to have some natural beast-like abilities, to observe things others cannot. Li Xun Huan gave him a congratulatory laugh, said, "Since you're all here, why not come and have a drink?"

The snow on the trees to the side of the road suddenly came down.

A person laughed heartily. "It's been ten years since we last met. I never thought your precious dagger is still young. I must congratulate you."

During the laugh, an one-armed man with a stare of an eagle appeared from the forest.

Another person also appeared from the other side of the road. This person's thin and small. Looks like he has no more than a pound of meat on him, that light wind can probably blow him away."

Ah Fei can see instantly that as this person appeared, there's no footprint in the snow.

For a person to be able to leave no footprint, even if he has the advantage of being a bit light, still must have incredible inner power.

Li Xun Huan smiled. "I only came back from the border area for half a month. Yet Golden Lion Escort Agency's head and 'Traveling Without Shadow' Mr. Yu Er both came to see me. My reputation must be pretty good."

That short old man smiled deviously. "It seems that Little Li Tan Hua's* fame is not undeserved. Your memory is

amazing. We only saw each other once thirteen years ago, yet you still recognize me, this old, useless man."

*[Note: Putting the word 'little' in front of one's last name is sometimes used by elders to call a younger person. 'Tan Hua' is a title in ancient China. Given to the 3rd place tester in the imperial examinations as a method to determine future government officials. Kind of like calling someone a "Dr." today for those with a Ph.D. Li Xun Huan, of course, got 3rd place in the examination. That's why Yu Er called him by that title, as a sign of respect. Try to remember the term 'Tan Hua', as it will appear many more times later in the book]

It's only now that Ah Fei saw that one of the old man's legs is broken. He could not imagine how a broken-legged man be an expert in lightness kung fu.

But he didn't understand that just because this man was handicapped at birth, he practiced his lightness kung fu much more rigorously to make up for the deficiency.

Ah Fei can't help but feel respect for this man.

Li Xun Huan chuckled. "Since you also invited some friends, how come you're not going to introduce them to us?"

Mr. Yu Er said coldly, "You're right, they also have heard of your fame, and would like to meet you."

As he spoke, four people appeared from the forest. Although it's daytime, Li Xun Huan still could not help but feel a chill when seeing these four people.

These four people all look mature, yet they still dress like kids, with brightly colored clothing with flowery designs. Their shoes are kids shoes with a tiger design in front.

Apron tied to their waist. Although their eyesight showed their mature age, they still act as if they are kids. If people see them, they'd probably throw up.

The most interesting thing is, they have bracelets with bells on their wrists and ankles. So they'd make a lot of noise when walking.

When the driver saw these four people, he immediately said, "Black snake was not killed by someone."

Li Xun Huan said, "Huh?"

The driver said, "they're killed by a scorpion's poison."

Li Xun Huan's mood was changed. "In that case, these four must be the disciples of the 5-Poison-Kid then."

The 'kid' in the yellow clothes laughed. "You destroyed that snowman we spent so much effort making. You're going to pay." As the word 'pay' came out, he suddenly flew toward Li Xun Huan, yet the bells on him did not make any noise.

Li Xun Huan just smiled at him, didn't even move.

But Yu Er also flew, intercepting that yellow-clothed 'kid'. Pulling him to the side.

'Golden Lion' suddenly stood up and laughed loudly. "Mr. Tan Hua here is incredibly rich. Forget a snowman, he can even afford to pay a 'gold man'. The four of you should not be so hasty. I want to introduce everyone."

The 'kid' in red said, "I know him. His last name is Li, first name is Xun Huan."

The other 'kid' in red added. "I also know he's an expert in

eating, drinking, woman, and gambling. So I've always wanted him to help us go seek some pleasure*."

*[Note: Li Xun Huan's first name, 'Xun Huan', means to 'seek pleasure'. The 'kid' in black used that exact term 'Xun Xun Huan', obviously as a play on words. I don't know why I bother pointing this out, though.]

The last 'kid' in green said, "I also know that he's quite a knowledgeable person, was able to score a Tan Hua in the imperial examinations. I heard his dad, and his dad's dad, were all Tan Huas."

The 'kid' in red giggled. "Unfortunately, this Little Li Tan Hua doesn't want to be a government official, but rather a thief."

While others might not care too much about what they said, Ah Fei was spellbound by all this information. He had no idea his new friend had such a colorful life.

He did not realize that they only picked some of the more spectacular aspects of Li Xun Huan's life. Li Xun Huan's whole life story can't be finished in three days and three nights.

Ah Fei also did not see that while Li Xun Huan's smiling, his eyes revealed terrible pain, as if his heart will be broken when hearing others speak of his past.

Suddenly, Yu Er said with a serious face, "You really do know a lot about Li Tan Hua. But have you ever heard? Little Li's Legendary Dagger, No equal under the Heavens, once leaving his hand, would NEVER miss!"

[I would like some help here. The phrase "Li Bu Xu Fa" describing his dagger is one of my favorite phrases in the book. It would be nice if someone can come up with a

better translation than the gay one I have up there.]

The 'kid' in yellow laughed. "Once the dagger's thrown, it never misses. So you must've been afraid that I would have died under his dagger, and then won't be able to explain this to my master, right? That's why you stopped me."

Li Xun Huan said with a smile, "But everyone can be rest assured, my second dagger is not really all that great. And my first dagger has absolutely no chance of killing six people."

"So if everyone wants revenge for Zhu Ge Lei, just go ahead."

'Golden Lion' laughed twice. "Zhu Ge Lei's doesn't deserve to live, why is brother Li's fault?"

Li Xun Huan responded, "Since everyone's not here for revenge, are you all really here to have a drink?"

Yu Er responded coldy, "We just want the package!"

Li Xun Huan raised his eyebrows. "Package?"

"Yes, that package needs to be sent by the escort agency. If there's any problems, the Golden Lion Escort Agency's reputation will be shot."

Li Xun Huan looked at black snake's body. "You mean the package is not with him?"

'Golden Lion' responded, "Brother Li really knows how to joke. With brother Li at the scene, how could black snake possibly get away with the package?"

Li Xun Huan sighed. "The thing I hate most in my life is

trouble. Why does trouble always seem to find me?"

'Golden Lion' didn't seem to hear him, instead kept talking. "Brother Li just have to give up that package, I'll leave immediately, and give brother Li some wine too. "

Li Xun Huan played around with the dagger in his hand. Suddenly smiled. "You're right, that package is with me. But I don't know whether I should give it to you or not. Give me some time to think.

Yu Er asked, "How long will it take?"

Li Xun Huan responded, "Just two hours. After two hours, we'll meet here again."

Yu Er didn't even hesitate. Said immediately, "Fine!"

He did not say another word before leaving.

The 'kid' in yellow suddenly chuckled. "In just one hour, you can already disappear. Why need two hours?"

Yu Er said, "Ever since Little Li Tan Hua entered the martial world and before retiring, had over 300 battles. He did not try to escape a single time."

They came quickly and went quickly. Even as they speak, they had already disappeared deep into the woods.

Ah Fei suddenly said, "You don't have the package."

"True."

"Then why did you lie?"

Li Xun Huan smiled a bit. "Although I did not take it, they would never have believed me. A battle was unavoidable.

It's better for me to admit it, rather than having to talk more."

"If a battle's unavoidable, why wait?"

Li Xun Huan said, "We must find someone in these two hours."

"Who?"

"The person who stole the package."

Li Xun Huan continued, "That night three people were at the table. Two are dead. We must find the third one."

Ah Fei thought deeply. "You're saying that guy in the purple coat, with a whip on his waist, and hair in his ears, right?"

Li Xun Huan smiled. "You just saw him for an instant. Yet you remembered such extreme details!"

"I did see him just for an instant. An instant is enough."

"You're right. He's the person I'm talking about. Of the people at the restaurant that night, only he knows the true value of that package. He stayed to the side so no one would notice him. That's why he has the chance to take it. Because the package is so valuable, he wants to keep it for himself. Yet he's afraid that his boss will find out, so he pushed the blame on me."

He smiled lightly, and continued. "Good thing this isn't the first time I'm wrongly blamed."

Ah Fei said, "The only reason those people know where you are must be because of him."

"Correct."

"But in order for 'Golden Lion' not to be suspicious of him, he must still be around!"

"Correct."

"That's why he must be with the 'Golden Lion' people. So all we need to do is find them to find him!"

Li Xun Huan tapped his shoulders. "You just have to be around in the martial world for 3-5 years, and everybody else's life will start to be miserable. Hopefully if we meet again, we're still friends."

He laughed heartily as he continued. "Because I really do not want to be your enemy."

Ah Fei looked at him silently. Then said, "You want me to leave now?"

Li Xun Huan said, "This is my business. It has nothing to do with you. They weren't looking for you. Why shouldn't you leave?"

Ah Fei said, "You don't want me get into this mess with you? Or do you simply not want me to travel with you?"

Li Xun Huan let out a sad look, but still kept smiling. "There's no never-ending party under the Heavens. We'll part eventually. Why care whether it's soon or late?"

Ah Fei has a heavy look on his face. Then got two glasses of wine from the carriage. "Let me toast you one more time."

Li Xun Huan drank the wine quickly. He wanted to smile, but instead started to cough again.

Ah Fei looked at him silently for a long time, then quickly turned around and left.

It's at this time that it began to snow again. It's so quiet one can hear the snowflakes landing on the ground.

Li Xun Huan stared at this youngster disappear into the snow and wind, stared at the ground's slow, lonely footprints.

He immediately poured another glass of wine. Then said, "Youngster. I give you another toast."

"You do know that I don't really want you to leave. It's just that your future is too bright. By being with me will only lead you to trouble. I'm a person that has made friends with trouble, bad luck, danger and sadness. I can... no longer have any more friends."

But Ah Fei can no longer hear those words.

The driver still just stood there like a statue. He did not speak, and although filled with snow, will not move.

Li Xun Huan drank again. Then turned towards him. "You wait here. It's best to bury this snake's body. I'll return in two hours."

The driver lowered his head. "I know the Golden Lion's palm is very famous, but its power is very exaggerated. You should need at most 40 moves to defeat him."

Li Xun Huan said, "Maybe it won't even take 10 moves."

"What about Yu Er?"

"His lightness kung fu is quite good, and is an expert with the hidden weapons. But I should still have no trouble

with him."

The driver said, "I heard that the disciples of the 5-poison-kid knows some very strange kung fu. Based on what I saw, their kung fu is different from most."

Li Xun Huan cut him off with a laugh. "Don't worry. I'm not afraid of these people. They do not pose a problem."

The driver is still very serious. "You don't have to lie to me. I know this trip is very dangerous. Young master should not let Master Fei leave at this time."

Li Xun Huan suddenly became a bit angry. "Since when did you began to like chattering?" he scolded.

The driver stopped immediately, and lowered his head even more. By the time he raised his head again, Li Xun Huan is gone, leaving sounds of his coughs.

Anyone that hears this continuous coughing sound in the middle of a snowfield could not help but feel sympathy. But the wind finally covered even the sound of his cough.

Tears dropped down the side of the driver's face. Talking to himself, "Young master. We were living so peacefully at the borders. Why did you come back to this place of pain and sadness? Can you still not forget her after ten years? Do you still want to see her? But after you see her, you still would not talk to her. Why do you even bother and bring more suffering to yourself?"

Once in the forest, Li Xun Huan's savvy, happy look suddenly changed, changing into that of a predator. His ears, eyes, nose, every ounce of muscle in his body searched the forest, leaving no trace missed. In the past twenty years, no one has escaped his pursuit.

Although his movement is quick as a rabbit, he doesn't look like he's in a hurry. Like a great dancer, no matter under what conditions, he can still maintain his gracefulness and composure.

Ten years ago, when he gave up everything he had and left for the borders, he also traveled on this road. At that time, spring flowers were just beginning to bloom.

He remember that there's a small bar here. He would always stop there for drinks. Although the wine is not the best, the scenery is. The mountain on the other side, the waterfall. There are many tourists then. He looked at those couples while drinking his bitter wine cup by cup. Thinking he'll forever leave this place. This is a memory he'll never forget.

Now, he can't believe he's back here again. Ten years. The people must all be new now. The little waitress now married. The married couple who loved each other deeply left this world. Even the peach trees, now trapped under the snow.

Oh but how he yearned that the little bar would still be there.

He thinks this way not because of old memories, but rather because he thinks the person he wants is here.

Although the world in this snow is vastly different from the Spring winds, he still feel stabbing pain from it.

Money, power, fame, place in society are all easy to give up. But those great memories, those sweet memories, all act like locks, trapping him so he can never escape. Never break free.

Li Xun Huan took out a wine bottle and drank the whole

bottle. He only started moving again after he finished coughing.

He really did see that little bar again.

He remembered that in the Spring, a no-name mountain flower would grow everywhere. He would drink wine here and enjoy the flowers.

Now everything has changed.

But he saw a carriage, and heard the sound of horses in the back.

Li Xun Huan knows that he did not guess wrong. They're really here! Because in this weather, in this area, cannot have any other tourists.

He picked up his pace, became more careful, quietly listened for a while. No sound came from the little bar. He then dashed towards the bar.

When he got really close, he found that this bar is quiet beyond belief. Other than some low horse sounds, everything's quiet.

Just as Li Xun Huan stepped up to the door, the floor gave a creak. He immediately backed off.

But still no sound.

Li Xun Huan sneaked to the back, thinking, "Maybe they're not here."

But he then saw 'Golden Lion', who's just staring at him. But there's no movement, like a statue.

Li Xun Huan sighed. "I would've never thought!"

He just said those three words before closing his mouth.

Because he just then realized that the 'Golden Lion' will never ever hear another voice again.

Chapter 3: Treasure Sways People's Heart

Li Xun Huan looked again. That Golden Lion's throat has already been stabbed!

Plus, the body is still actually standing! This means that whoever killed him has an incredible sword skill. The lightness! The quickness!

After the killer's sword penetrated Golden Lion's throat, he immediately pulled his sword, requiring not even a tiny bit of extra energy.

The Golden Lion obviously had his guard up, yet even after this sword penetrated his throat, he still had not made a move. His body was still in a state of rest.

What an incredibly quick sword move!

Astonishment appeared on Li Xun Huan's face. He knows that the Golden Lion has been famous for more than twenty years, and never had any major problems during this time. His escort agency is also very famous. This showed that he's obviously very good. Yet before he can put up a defense, someone's sword is already in his throat.

Even if he's just a wooden person, to penetrate a wooden person's throat, pull out and still leave it standing, is not an easy task.

Li Xun Huan turned around and entered the bar. There's only one table with dishes on it. But they had not been touched. Neither was the wine.

The 5-poison-kid's four disciples also turned into dead corpses!

The heads of the dead corpses are facing outward, feet inward, like a cross. Their faces filled with happiness. And they also died from one sword through the throat!

Then he saw Yu Er in a corner room. His hand holding a hidden weapon tightly.

But before he can release the weapon, he also died from one sword through the throat.

Li Xun Huan doesn't know to be astonished or happy. He just continuously say to himself, "What a really, really fast sword."

If it were two days ago, he would've never thought there exist a person with such marvelous sword skill. There used to be a 'Snow Eagle' swordsman, considered to be the best in the martial world. Although he has the lightness and quickness, he definitely does not have the ruthlessness in his moves. Besides, this swordsman has since long retired, and would never come to this place today.

As for the great experts of the past years, Shen Lang, Neng Xiong Er, Wang Ling Hua, are all said to be dead or retired. Besides, none of them used a sword!

Other than these people, Li Xun Huan can't possibly think of

any other swordsman with such skill, until now. Now he knows that there is still one person in this world.

This person is that mysterious, lonely youngster Ah Fei!

Li Xun Huan closed his eyes, as if to figure how he entered this room, how the four 'kids' would surround him. But before they can move, Ah Fei's sword, quick as lightning and deadly as a snake, has entered their throats.

Yu Er stayed at the side, obviously wanting to release his hidden weapons.

He became famous for his lightness kung fu and hidden weapons. Therefore

his speed must be amazing. Yet just as he's about to release his weapons,

the sword already flew towards him. One sword through the throat.

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Toy. Someone actually said his sword is like a toy."

He suddenly saw that there are words carved onto the wall.

"You killed Zhu Ge Lei for me. I killed these people for you. I am no longer

in your debt. I know a person can never ever be in debt!"

"I only killed one person for you. Yet you killed six for me.

You know that

a person cannot have debts. So why did you make me be in your debt?" Li

Xun Huan said. He then continued to read on.

"Although I killed more people than you did, but the situation is different.

Your one can be equal to my six. So you don't owe me anything either."

Li Xun Huan can't help but laugh. "The way you make your calculations is definitely not very bright. Looks like you should not go into business in the future."

Not only does the wall contain these words, it also has a spearhead. Li Xun Huan obviously went into the direction of the spearhead. As he went into the room, a sword suddenly came at him! A very bright sword, the tip point right at him!

The person holding the sword is a very old person. Although his beard is not long, his faces is filled with wrinkles.

As this old person holds the sword, he yelled, "Who are you?"

Although he wants to speak louder, he can't raise his voice, which is just trembling.

Li Xun Huan immediately saw who he is. He smiled. "You don't remember me?"

The old man shook his head.

Li Xun Huan said, "But I know you. You're the owner here. Ten years ago, I came here a few times for some wine.

The old man's eyes lost much of its alertness, but he still held his sword at Li Xun Huan. "What's your last name?"

"My last name is Li."

It's only at this time that the old man let out a deep breath. His sword also fell to the ground. "So it's Li... Li Tan Hua. I have been waiting for you."

"Waiting for me?"

The old man said, "A heroic young man came here, kill many bad people, but kept me alive. Saying that a Li Tan Hua would pass by. "He wants me to give you this person. If there's any problems, he'll take my life."

"Where's this person?"

"In the kitchen."

The kitchen is not small. Plus it's very clean. And there really is a person here tied to the chair. He's very thin and short, plus there's hair coming out of his ear.

Li Xun Huan had long figured out that Ah Fei would leave this person alive for him to interrogate. But this person could not possibly believe he would see Li Xun Huan. His face turned pale, unable to speak. Apparently, Ah Fei not only tied him very tightly, but also used a cloth to cover his mouth.

He's obviously afraid that this person would try to scare or bribe the old man, so he even covered his mouth. It's at this time that Li Xun Huan realized that he's very attentive to details.

But why couldn't he just seal this person's pressure points?

Li Xun Huan's dagger glowed, taking off the cloth covering this person's mouth. The person is almost about to faint.

He wants to beg for mercy, but his mouth is so dry he can't speak.

Li Xun Huan didn't hurry him up either. He just sat there, and ask that old man to bring the best wine to him.

"Your last name?"

That person's face is now yellow, trying to wet his mouth using his tongue, then stuttered, "My name is Hong Han Min."

Li Xun Huan said, "I know you can drink. Here, have a cup."

He then actually cut off this person's ropes. And held out his hand to give this person the cup of wine. This person is just amazed beyond belief. He's afraid of taking this cup of wine, yet wouldn't dare not to.

Li Xun Huan laughed. "If someone asked me to drink wine, I would never refuse."

Hong Han Min can only take the cup, his hand still shaking, although finally drank half a cup, the other half spilled onto his shirt.

Li Xun Huan sighed. "It's so unfortunate. If you simply imitate me and find a dagger to carve wood, your hand would not be shaking. Wood carving can make a person calm and stable. This is my little secret."

He then poured another two cups, laughingly said, "One should always remember never to waste good wine."

Hong Han Min this time took the cup with both hands. Afraid that he would spill it, he immediately drank it in one gulp.

Li Xun Huan said, "Very good. I didn't learn much in my life, just these two things. Now that I've told you this information, how are you going to thank me?"

Hong Han min responds, "I...I..."

Li Xun Huan said, "You don't have to do anything else, just give me the package, and I'll be satisfied."

Hong Han Min took a deep breath, "What package?"

Li Xun Huan said, "You don't know?"

Hong Han Min's face let out a forced smile, "I really do not know."

Li Xun Huan shook his head. "I've always thought that people become more honest after drinking. But you truly disappointed me."

Hong Han Min can only smile along. "Mr. Li...Li, there must be a misunderstanding. I truly do not"

Li Xun Huan's face suddenly became more serious. "You drank my wine, then you lie to me? you should return my

wine to me now."

Hong Han Min said, "Yes. Yes I'll go buy some now."

Li Xun Huan said, "I just want the two cups you drank, not the cups you can buy."

Hong Han Min gathered himself, used his sleeves to wipe off his sweat. Then said in a stuttered manner, "But... but... the wine is already in my stomach. How do I return it?"

Li Xun Huan said, "This is actually quite simple."

The dagger glowed, and suddenly found its tip pointing at Hong Han Min's stomach.

Li Xun Huan said coldly, "Since the wine is in you, I just need to open your stomach to get it back."

Hong Han Min's face turned white, but forced himself to smile. "Mr. Li, why do joke with me?"

Li Xun Huan said. "Do I look like I'm joking?"

He applied just a bit of pressure, and took a light stab at Hong Han Min's stomach, so that blood would come out.

Because only a coward lies, and when a coward sees his own blood, he'll start telling the truth. Li Xun Huan knows this logic better than everyone else.

Who would've thought that when he stabbed Hong Han Min, it's like stabbing a stone. Hong Han Min's face is still smiling, as if he did not feel any pain at all.

Li Xun Huan's eyes flickered, his hand stopped. This coward

actually can't be penetrated by a knife, yet Li Xun Huan did not show any sign of surprise.

Instead he smiled and said, "You've been around for quite a while now, right?"

Hong Han Min couldn't believe he would ask this question. Gathered himself and answered with a smile, "Already 20 years in the martial world."

Li Xun Huan said, "Then you must know that there are some treasures in this world that very few people have ever seen, but rumored to exist. One of them is..."

He looked at Hong Han Min, then continued one word at a time, "is the Golden Thread Vest. Supposedly, it cannot be penetrated by weapons, and cannot be burned by fire. Since you've been around for 20 years, surely you know of such an item."

Hong Han Min's face now looked like a wash-cloth. He jumped up and tried to escape.

His speed is not slow, in an instant he arrived at the door. Yet just as he's about to leave the room, Li Xun Huan has already blocked his path.

Hong Han Min bit his teeth, turned around and took out a silver-chained spear. Like a snake, the spear made its way to Li Xun Huan.

It seems that he must have spent 20-30 years on practicing this spear technique. As he made this particular move, the chain actually became straight, carrying the wind with it as it aims for Li Xun Huan's throat.

Only to hear a 'Dang' sound, Li Xun Huan simply raised his hand, the hand that still is holding a wine cup, and used the cup to block the spear point.

For some reason, the spear did not break the cup.

Li Xun Huan smiled and said, "If there's one more person that tries to convince me to stop drinking, I would tell him all the benefits of drinking, and that a wine cup once saved my life."

Hong Han Min looked like a statue as he stood there. Sweat dropping down his face like rain.

Li Xun Huan said, "If you don't want to fight anymore, take off the Golden Thread Vest. You can use it to pay for my two cups of wine."

Hong Han Min asked, "You really want it?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I don't particularly care for this item. You were able to steal it from under my eyes, which shows that you have some skills. But you should've never told others that I took the package. I don't like to be wrongfully blamed."

"You're right. I took the package. And the package does indeed contain the Golden Thread Vest. However, however,"

Not only was he so nervous he couldn't speak, even tears came out of his eyes.

Li Xun Huan said, "Golden Thread Vest might be a treasure for protection. But what do you need it for? I can still kill you with one blow. Why do you waste so much effort trying to

get it?"

He continued, "This is not the type of item you should have. If you give it to me, maybe you can live for a few more years."

Hong Han Min replied, "I also know that I'm not worthy of such an item, but I didn't steal it for myself."

Li Xun Huan said, "So you took it to give to someone else? Who would that be?"

Hong Han Min bit his lips, so hard blood came out.

Li Xun Huan said calmly, "I have many ways to make someone tell the truth, but I do not like those methods. So I sincerely hope that you do not make me use them."

Hong Han Min finally let out a breath. "Fine. I'll talk."

Li Xun Huan said, "You better start from the beginning."

Hong Han Min started. "Have you heard of 'Super Thief' Dai Wu? He's a nobody, so Mr. Li might not know him."

Li Xun Huan laughed. "Not only do I know him, he's also an acquaintance. His lightness and fighting kung fu are both quite good. Plus he's a great drinker."

Hong Han Min said, "This 'Golden Thread Vest', is something he stole from somewhere."

"Really? So how did it end up with you?"

Hong Han Min said, "He and Zhu Ge Lei were good friends. We met a while back and drank together. When he got really

drunk, he took out the vest to show off. Zhu Ge Lei got jealous, and..."

Li Xun Huan face became stern. "Since you people were able to do such a shameful act, why don't you have the guts to say it?"

Hong Han Min lowered his head. "Dai Wu knows that this Golden Thread Vest is something everyone in the martial world wants. He therefore should not have been drinking."

Li Xun Huan said coldly. "It's not that he shouldn't be drinking, but that he should not have made friends with the wrong people."

Hong Han Min's pale face suddenly showed a hint of red.

Li Xun Huan said, "This Golden Thread Vest is said to be one of the 'Three Treasures of the Martial World'. But it actually has very few practical uses. Because only when two top kung fu expert fight each other in a battle does it come in handy. A normal person would mostly likely die from having the item. So I don't see why people like it so much. So there must be something else, right?"

Hong Han Min replied. "Right, there is a secret. However, this secret probably should no longer be considered a secret any more, because..."

When he got here, the owner of the bar brought in two bottles of wine. He said with a smile, "This is excellent wine. Official Tan Hua should first drink a cup before continue on."

Li Xun Hua showed a bitter smile. "If you want me to come back here often, never call me by this title. Whenever I hear this title, I can't even drink anymore."

The wine cup is still in his hand. He poured the cup full. As he smelled the sweetness from the wine, his mood became much better, complimenting, "Great wine."

As he drink the wine, he began to cough again.

The old man brought him a chair to sit down, then said, "Coughing's bad for your health. Be careful."

The old man's face suddenly showed a smile, then continued, "However, this wine is perfect for curing coughs. If you drink this, I promise that you'll stop coughing."

Li Xun Huan laughed, "If wine can cure cough, then that would be perfect. Why don't you have some too?"

The old man said, "I don't drink."

Li Xun Huan asked, "Why? People who sell dumplings would rather eat man tou(common Chinese food, basically bread w/o yeast) than dumplings. So people who sell wine would rather drink water?"

The old man replied, "I would usually drink a cup or two. But I can't drink this particular wine."

His eyes suddenly showed signs of treachery.

Li Xun Huan acted as if he did not notice. He continued to smile as he asked, "Why?"

The old man kept starring at the dagger in his hand, then said, "Because if I drink this and then use a bit of energy, I'll die from poisoning."

Li Xun Huan seems tongue-tied.

But Hong Han Min became really happy. "I never thought you'd help me. I'll reward you richly later."

The old man said coldly, "You don't have to thank me."

Hong Han Min's mood changed, but kept smiling. "Elder you really can hide your true nature. I guess you also want.."

As he spoke, his silver-chained spear flew out again.

The old man small, short body suddenly grew a foot, turned his left hand, and captured the spear point. Then spoke loudly, "You think you're good enough to fight me?"

This cowardly old man in an instant seemed to have changed into another person. Even his face began to glow.

Hong Han Min saw his strange look, then suddenly remembered a person. He immediately started to beg. "Elder please spare my life. I did not know that elder is..."

His begging came too late. The old man's right fist is already aiming at him. After a 'bang', Hong Han Min's body got hit into midair, the chain on his hands also broke into two. Blood came pouring out as his body hit the wall.

This power of this fist is incredible.

Li Xun Huan sighed and shook his head. "I told you, by have this Golden Thread Vest, you'll die quicker."

The old man threw the half-spear on the floor, then looked at Hong Han Min's body, his wrinkles began to show once again.

Li Xun Huan said. "You haven't killed in twenty years, right?"

The old man looked at him and said, "I did not forget how to kill, however."

Li Xun Huan asked, "Do you think it's worth it to kill for this thing?"

The old man replied, "Twenty years ago, I didn't need any reason to kill."

Li Xun Huan said, "But twenty years have passed. Hiding for twenty years is not easy. Exposing your identity for this is not worth it."

The old man said, "So you know who I am?"

Li Xun Huan laughed. "You should not forget, Sun Kui twenty years ago was a very famous person. Yet he had the guts to run away with the wife of the head of the Southern 72 Docks. I really admire this type of courage."

The old man said, "Even in this state, you still can say this type of stuff?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Please don't think I'm trying to be witty here. A man, for the woman he loves, willing to risk his own life and fame and everything, this type of person can at least be considered to be a real man. I had really respected you, too. But now.."

He shook his head. "Now I'm disappointed, because I did not think that you would be a devious person. You can only try to poison me rather than to challenge me to a real fight."

Sun Kui looked at him, before he could speak, another

person laughingly said, "You should not blame him for this. When it comes to poison techniques, he's terrible."

This is a voice of a woman. It's sound very alluring.

Li Xun Huan laughed. "You're right. I should've long guessed that is the result of Ms. Qiang Wei. Li Xun Huan is quite satisfied that he can die in the hands of the famous beauty of twenty years ago."

That voice chuckled as she said, "Your mouth is so sweet. If I had met you twenty years ago, I probably would not have ran away with him."

As she's laughing, she came out.

After twenty years, she did not seem too old. Her eyes are still very attractive, her teeth very white, but her waist...

Actually, she no longer has a waist. Her body is like a water bowl.

Li Xun Huan's reaction is as if he just swallowed a whole egg.

So this is Ms. Qiang Wei? He couldn't believe his eyes.

Ms. Qiang Wei wears a red coat, her perfume can be smelled from a long distance away.

She looked at Li Xun Huan and laughingly said, "What a charming Mr. Tan Hua, no wonder you're so famous. I haven't seen such a enchanting man in twenty years. But twenty years ago..."

She sighed before continuing, "Twenty years ago I was living so well. At that time, so many young heroes would come beg

to see me. If they can simply look at me and say some words, they would feel like being in heaven. If you don't believe me, just ask him."

Sun Kui's face looked heavy, as if he would not say a word.

Li Xun Huan looked at Ms. Qiang Wei's neck and the all the fat on it, then looked at Sun Kui, feeling a bit of pity on the inside.

He saw that this old man's past twenty years have not been well.

Ms. Qiang Wei sighed again. "But the past twenty years were so hard on me. I could only hide in my little room, afraid to come out. I really regret running away with this idiot."

Sun Kui also took a deep breath. "Who doesn't regret it, who isn't a turtle egg."

Ms. Qiang Wei stomped her foot and started to yell, "What are you saying? Say it again! Lady I gave up a relaxing life to come live in this crap place with you, a great beauty such as myself, being ruined to this point, and you have the guts to say you regret it?"

Sun Kui's nose is full of steam, yet he shut his mouth.

Ms. Qiang Wei said again, "Mr. Tan Hua, you say it, does this guy not have any heart? If I had known it would get to this point, I should've just died."

She tried hard to keep blinking her eyes, but tears would not come out.

Li Xun Huan smiled, "Good thing mistress did not die, or I

would have regretted living this life."

Ms. Qiang Wei proudly smiled, "You really wanted to see me that much?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Of course. Where else can I find a beauty this fat?"

Ms. Qiang Wei's face became all white, but Sun Kui could not hold down his laughter.

Li Xun Huan said, "Actually, mistress does not really need this Golden Thread Vest either. Because even if I cut you in half, it would still not fit."

Ms. Qiang Wei bit her teeth, saying, "Looks like I better not let you die quickly."

She pulled off a very thin needle from her hair, walking over to Li Xun Huan. Yet Li Xun Huan still simply sat there without moving.

Sun Kui said, "Since we already have the vest, let's go on with our business. Why bother with him?"

Ms. Qiang Wei replied, "You don't have the right to mind my business!"

Li Xun Huan really can't move, and can only stare at her.

Who would've thought that just as the needle was going to hit Li Xun Huan's eye, Sun Kui suddenly kicked from behind, sending her into the ceiling.

By the time she got back down, she's already half-dead.

Li Xun Huan's surprised beyond belief. He couldn't bear not to ask, "Did you kill her for me?"

Sun Kui said angrily, "These twenty years, I already had enough of her temper, nearly had gone insane. If I don't kill her, I'd probably die in half a year."

Li Xun Huan said, "Yet this is what you wanted, right? Don't forget, twenty years ago..."

Sun Kui said, "You really think I was the one who seduced her?"

"You didn't?"

"When I met her, I had no idea she's Yang Da Hu's wife. That's why I would..."

He sighed twice, then continued, "Who would've thought that she forced me to take her. By that time, Yang Da Hu has already sent 20 kung fu experts there. I had to go."

Li Xun Huan said, "At least she loves you, or why else would she do this?"

"Love me? Hei hei."

He then bit his teeth while laughing. "Its only afterwards that I knew that I'm simply being used. It seems that when her husband left home for business, she found a little white face, and they had a child. She was afraid that she wouldn't be able to explain to her husband, so she took some money an they ran away.

Li Xun Huan said, "Really? It seems that there are so much more to this story."

Sun Kui said, "Who would've thought that that little white face stole the jewelry she took from home and left? She didn't get the man nor the money, but thankfully met me."

"If you knew about all this, then why don't you explain?"

Sun Kui laughed. "I only found out after she accidentally said it when drunk. By that time, everything's already too late. I couldn't explain even if I wanted to."

"Then what about the child?"

Sun Kui would not say a word.

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Since you knew this, you should've killed her. Why wait?"

Sun Kui still would not say a word.

Li Xun Huan said, "I'm about to die anyway, why don't you just tell me?"

Sun Kui thought for a long time, then said, "There's one good thing about having a bar, and that's to be able to hear a lot of interesting things. Do you know what's the interesting thing these days?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I don't have a bar."

Sun Kui looked around, as if he's afraid someone will hear him, then said in a low voice, "Have you heard? From thirty years ago, without equal in the world, 'Plum Flower Bandit' has appeared again!"

Li Xun Huan also could not help but be interested when the

words 'Plum Flower Bandit' were said.

Sun Kui said, "When Plum Flower Bandit dominated the martial world, you were still little. So maybe you don't know his power. But I can tell you, no one in the martial world knew who he is. Even the head of the Cang De sect, Number 1 sword in the world at that time, Wu Wen Tian died in his hands.

"This person moves around frequently and mysteriously. Wu Wen Tian just sent out the message to kill him, and died the second day. Only..."

When he got to this point, he stopped and looked around. As if he's afraid that Plum Flower Bandit would sneak up from behind.

But there's no one. Even the snow falling on the roof can be heard. Only then did Sun Kui continued, "Only his chest suddenly added 50 holes in the shape of a plum flower. Each hole thin as a sewing needle hole. Everyone knows that this is the symbol of the Plum Flower Bandit. Yet no one knows what kind of hidden weapon he used. Because no one who fought him are still alive. The only thing people know is that he's a man."

"Really?"

Sun Kui said, "Because not only does he like treasures, he's also a rapist. Everyone, good or evil, in the martial world hates his guts, but can't do anything about it. Every time some says to take care of him, that person would die in three days. Carrying that symbol on their chest"

Li Xun Huan asked, "So everyone who died in his hands had that symbol on their chest?"

"Yes, the front chest is suppose to be the best defensive spot of a person's body, yet that Plum Flower Bandit always attack there without exception. As if he didn't, no one would know his power."

Li Xun Huan laughed. "That's why you think that by wearing this vest, you can handle Plum Flower Bandit. And by capturing him, you can be famous again. Everyone would be in your gratitude. No one would still care about your past."

Sun Kui's eyes flickered, saying, "Everyone knows that if you can avoid his first move to the chest, you can win the fight."

His face full of joy, then continued, "Because his first move has NEVER failed, so he does not need to worry about any follow-up moves. Making himself very vulnerable."

Li Xun Huan said, "This sounds very logical."

Sun Kui laughed heartily. "If it makes no sense, then people would not be vying so hard for this vest."

Li Xun Huan said, "But you've been here living this quiet life for twenty years now. Why bother going back to the martial world?"

Chapter 4: Beauty Touches a Person's Soul

Sun Kui said, "What do you know? If I can kill Plum Flower Bandit, not only do I get fame, but also many other great things."

"What things?"

Sun Kui said, "After Plum Flower Bandit left thirty years ago, everyone thought he's gone forever. Who would've believed that he would come back? In 8 months, he did another eighty-some cases, even raped the Head of Hua Shan sect's daughter."

Li Xun Huan said, "This person should be around seventy now. I didn't expect him to be still so interested in girls."

Sun Kui said, "After he re-appeared, everyone who has anything of value, any girl of beauty, became restless. That's why more than ninety households have announced, whoever can kill the Plum Flower Bandit would receive part of all their ownings. One can imagine such a sum of money."

Li Xun Huan said, "Which means this is no longer a secret."

Sun Kui nodded. "In addition, the most beautiful woman in the martial world said she would marry whoever disposes of the Plum Flower Bandit."

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Money and woman certainly moves

people's heart. No wonder you would give up your life to get into this mess. Even killing your own wife. Looks like its my turn to die now."

Sun Kui said, "Speaking from my heart, I feel that you should not die. But I have to kill you."

Li Xun Huan suddenly laughed. "Speaking from your heart, do you really think you can kill me?"

Sun Kui had already made his move, but he suddenly stopped upon hearing this. Staring at Li Xun Huan, then let out a flicker of a smile, saying, "For a person like you to live til today, it seems that you do not die easily. But now..."

Suddenly a sound came from the outside.

A person started to laugh. "Speaking from your heart, does he look like he's been poisoned?"

Sun Kui was shocked. He did not realize when a person in green clothes suddenly appeared in the front door. This person's face looks pale and bland, as if he's perhaps wearing a mask, or maybe not.

He put his hand behind his back, then walked in, saying, "If a person wants to put poison in an alcoholic's wine, then that person must be able to do some really stupid things, do you think?"

This last sentence is aimed at Li Xun Huan. Li Xun Huan suddenly realized that this person's eyes are very alluring, completely different from his face.

It's like putting two pearls on a dead pig.

Li Xun Huan looked at this pair of eyes, then smiled.

“Cheating while betting money with a gambler, Putting poison in the wine of an alcoholic, saying that another woman is pretty in front of your own wife- No matter who does any one of the three will live to regret it.”

The man in green said coldly, “Looks like when these people regret their decision, it’s too late.”

Sun Kui stared at them, then checked the wine bottle in a hurry.

Li Xun Huan smiled, “Don’t bother. The poison’s in there.”

“Then you...”

Li Xun Huan said, “Whether there’s poison in that wine, others might not know. But for an alcoholic like myself, the smell would give away the poison.

He continued, “This is also the good thing about drinking so much. Those who don’t drink would never know.”

“But I saw you drinking the wine!”

Li Xun Huan said, “I did drink it, but threw it all back out when I coughed.”

Sun Kui’s body shook, the wine bottle in his hand dropped to the ground.

The man in green said, “Looks like he already regret his decision, but it’s too late.”

Sun Kui yelled, then quickly attacked the man in green three times with his fists.

These twenty years, his kung fu not only did not get worse, it got better. This fist has both incredible power

and speed.

Anyone can see that this fist can easily break someone's skull.

It seems that the man in green not only did not have the time to defend, he doesn't even have the time to dodge the punch.

Who would've thought that he neither blocked nor dodged, but simply moved his hand.

He obviously moved after Sun Kui, yet for some reason, while Sun Kui's fist did not reach his shirt, this person's palm already hit Sun Kui's face.

It seems as if this palm was very light, yet Sun Kui started to scream in pain, rolling on the floor.

By the time he got up again, half his face looks horrible, there's purple in red, transparent in purple. Even one of his eyes got knocked to the side.

The man in green said, "Speaking from the heart, I feel that you should not die. I didn't intend on killing you, but my hands..."

Sun Kui's half-face that did not get hit looks unusually normal. Yet the part where he got hit looks like dead meat. This picture is not pretty at all.

His remaining eye is filled with shock, looking at the man in green's hand. "Your hand... your hand..."

The man in green has a pair of green iron gloves. Looks very ugly.

Sun Kui's face shows that he has given up hope. His voice

weak, saying, "What did I do to deserve this? Why did I meet the Green Devil Hand. Li...Li Tan Hua. You're a good person. I beg of you to kill me now."

Li Xun Huan just sat there without moving, looking at the man in green's hands. Then he kicked the broken spear to Sun Kui.

Sun Kui picked up the spear, saying, "Thank you. Thank you. I will never forget your gratitude even in death."

He then used all his force to plunge the spear into his throat, black blood pouring out as he died.

Li Xun Huan looked up. "There are 7 major poisons in the martial world. The most poisonous is the Green Devil Hand. Looks like they're not kidding."

The man in green also looked at his hand, saying, "Everyone else says that people who get hit by this hand would rather die than to endure the pain. Looks like they didn't exaggerate."

Li Xun Huan's eyes moved to his face, saying, "But you're not the 'Green Devil' Yi Ku."

The man in green said, "How do you know that? Do you know him?"

"Yes"

The man in green almost laughed. "I didn't want to pretend to be him. I'm simply his..."

Li Xun Huan said, "Yi Ku doesn't have a disciple."

The man in green said, "Who said I'm his disciple? He's

not even worthy to be MY disciple.”

“Really?”

“You think I’m kidding?”

Li Xun Huan said, “I’m not interested in your past.”

The man in green’s eyes suddenly glowed, starring at Li Xun Huan. “What are you interested in then? Golden Thread Vest?”

Li Xun Huan did not respond. He just played with the little dagger in his hand.

The man in green also looked at this dagger, saying, “Everyone claims that your dagger never misses once thrown, are they exaggerating?”

Li Xun Huan replied, “A lot of people used to doubt this statement.”

“What about now?”

Li Xun Huan’s face seems to exhibit a hint of pride, saying, “Now those people are dead.”

The man in green thought for a second, then burst out laughing.

His laugh is so strange, as if its forced. Although he laughs loudly, his expression remains the same. “To tell the truth, I really want to try it too.”

Li Xun Huan said, “I don’t think you want to try.”

The man in green stopped laughing. Saying, “The vest is on that dead person, right?”

“Yes.”

The man in green said, “So if I were to move that dead person, then...”

Li Xun Huan cut him off. “Then I’m afraid you would become a dead person too!”

The man in green laughed. “I’m not afraid of you. But I don’t have a habit of wanting to gamble. Nor do I like danger.”

Li Xun Huan said, “These are good habits.”

The man in green said, “But I have a way to make you hand over this vest.”

“Really?”

The man in green said, “You should realize, this ‘Green Devil Hand’ is made with rare metals, mixed with hundreds of poisons, then used seven years to forge. Can be said to be the most dominating weapon in the martial world.”

Li Xun Huan said, “Bai Xiao Sheng’s weapons list rank Green Devil Hand number nine. I can see why its so valuable.”

The man in green said, “So if I give you this glove, would you give me the vest?”

Li Xun Huan thought for a second. Then said, “My dagger is made by a regular blacksmith using 6 hours. Yet on Bai Xiao Sheng’s weapons list, it’s ranked number three!”

The man in green sighed. “You’re trying to say that

weapons aren't important. What's important is the person holding the weapon, right?"

Li Xun Huan said, "You're very smart."

The man in green said, "So you won't make the exchange."

Li Xun Huan said, "If I wanted it, it would not be in your hands right now!"

The man in green thought a bit more, then took out a box. When he opened the box, a shiny short sword appeared.

The man in green said, "Precious sword is befitting of a hero. This 'Fish Intestine Sword'[Don't ask me why this nickname is suppose to be good] has no equal in the world. It should be good enough for you, right?"

Li Xun Huan asked, "Are you 'Hidden Sword Palace' Hidden Dragon Elder's disciple?"

"No."

"Then where did this sword come from?"

The man in green said, "That old geezer's dead. His son You Long Sheng gave it to me."

Li Xun Huan said, "This sword is amazingly precious. 'Hidden Sword Palace' is only so famous only because of this sword. When the sword was stolen years ago, they spent an incredible amount of effort getting it back. How could You Long Sheng possibly give this away?"

The man in green said, "Forget the sword, even if I ask for his head, he'd bring it to me on a silver platter. Do you believe me?"

Li Xun Huan thought for a while, then said, "This sword's value is way above that vest. Why make the trade?"

The man in green said, "I have a strange habit. The harder an item is for me to get, the more I want it."

Li Xun Huan said, "You know, I also have this habit."

The man in green said, "So will you make the trade?"

"No."

The man in green said, "Why do you want the vest so much?"

Li Xun Huan said, "That's none of your business."

The man in green chuckled, "I heard that Little Li Tan Hua neither cared for fame nor fortune. Ten years ago he gave up fame, all his valuables, and retired. I never thought that this type of person would be this interested in this vest."

Li Xun Huan said, "My reasons are probably similar to yours."

The man in green looked at him, "You mean you want the most beautiful woman in the world?"

Li Xun Huan smiled. "Maybe."

The man in green also smiled, saying, "I have long heard that you have never rejected beautiful woman nor great wine."

Li Xun Huan said, "Unfortunately, you are not an incredible beauty."

The man in green smiled. "How do you know I'm not?"

'His' laughter suddenly changed. Changed to a very sexy laugh.

During his laugh, he took off his gloves, revealing his hands.

Li Xun Huan has never seen a pair of hands so beautiful.

He's been with countless beauties in his life. Even before he held a dagger and a wine cup, he's already held many beauty's hands.

However, all of those hands have at least some problems. Even the woman of his dreams, the woman he could never ever forget, also has flaws on her hand.

Yet the hands that appear before him are perfect in every way.

The man in green asked, "Do you think my hands are prettier than the Green Devil Hand?"

Her voice suddenly became that mesmerizing.

Li Xun Huan sighed, saying, "Even if you use this pair of hands to kill people, they would gladly die in your hands. Why bother with the Green Devil Hand?"

The man in green smiled so beautifully, saying, "Does my offer look more attractive now?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Still not good enough."

The man in green chuckled, saying, "Men are always so greedy, especially powerful men. The more powerful they

are, the greedier they get.”

Her body twisted slightly, and her outer clothing fell off.

Li Xun Huan poured a cup of the non-poisonous wine, then said, “One needs wine for watching beauty.”

The man in green asked, “You don’t think its enough, do you?”

Li Xun Huan answered, “Man tend to be quite greedy.”

Her body is that amazing. Making any man feel that he’s not worthy of this body.

She smiled as she took off her shoes.

Her feet are that pretty, making people’s hearts pound. If someone says that many men would be willing to die from stomping by these feet, no one would doubt him.

Then, she showed her long legs.

At this moment, Li Xun Huan almost stopped breathing.

The person in green said, “Is this enough yet?”

Li Xun Huan said while drinking, “If I say it’s enough now, then I must be an idiot.”

She then proceeded to take off the rest of her clothes.

No one would feel that such a beauty could exist. Yet this beauty is now willing to show Li Xun Huan everything.

The only thing left is her mask.

She looked at Li Xun Huan, saying, “Now should be

enough, right?”

Li Xun Huan said, “Not yet. Just a bit more.”

She said, “You should know when to be satisfied.”

Li Xun Huan said, “Those easily satisfied usually miss out on a lot of good things.”

She asks, “Why must you see my face? Why not leave some things to the imagination? That might be more interesting.”

Li Xun Huan said, “Because I know that many women with great bodies have an ugly face.”

“Do you think I look ugly?”

“Maybe.”

She sighed, “Looks like you’ll never give up, but I still feel you still should not see my face.”

“Why?”

She said, “After I exchange the Golden Thread Vest with you, I’ll leave immediately. You’ll never see me again. I give you your most satisfying moment in your life, so this is a fair trade. Its best that we never see each other again.”

“That sounds logical.”

“But once you see my face, you’re never forget me. And I might not be nice to you again. Then you can only dream of me, frustrating yourself.”

Li Xun Huan smiled, “You’re pretty sure of yourself.”

She said, "Why shouldn't I be so sure of myself?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Maybe I don't want to make the deal."

"You don't?"

She finally raised her hand and took off the mask.

"Now do want to make the deal?"

Her face is just perfect. In addition to that body, absolutely no man on Earth can possibly resist her.

Li Xun Huan sighed. "No wonder Yi Ku would willingly give you the Green Devil Hand, that Yu Long Sheng would give you his family treasure. Now I believe you."

This incredible beauty simply kept smiling, but did not speak.

Because she feels that she no longer needs to speak.

Her eyes can talk, her smile can talk, her hand, chest, legs, all can talk.

She knows that this is enough. If a man still doesn't know her feelings, that person must be retarded.

So she just waited.

Yet Li Xun Huan still did not get up. Instead he just poured another cup of wine, saying, "Thanks. My eyes haven't been this satisfied for quite a long time now."

She bit her lips, saying, "I never thought a man like you needs wine to bring out courage."

Li Xun Huan said, "Because I know that beautiful woman are not easy to satisfy."

She then immediately threw herself into the arms of Li Xun Huan.

The wine cup fell to the ground, breaking apart.

One of his hand began to feel her back, yet the other is still holding that dagger, that small yet sharp dagger.

The young woman said in a soothing manner, "When a man is doing something like this, he should not be holding a knife."

Li Xun Huan's voice is also soothing. "When a man has a weapon, you should not be in his arms."

That young woman laughed, "You mean you could possibly bring yourself to kill me?"

Li Xun Huan also laughed, "A young girl should never be so arrogant, nor should she take off all her clothes to seduce a man. She should instead wear her clothes tightly, waiting for the man to seduce her. Otherwise, the man would not feel satisfied.

His hand now raised his dagger, its tip on her throat now, a bit of blood came out, falling on her pure white chest, like a plum flower in a middle of a snowfield.

She's fully shocked now, her soft body suddenly hard.

Li Xun Huan laughs, "Are you still that sure of yourself now? Do you still think I can't possibly kill you now?"

The dagger's tip continues to be on her neck.

Her lips shaking, unable to speak.

Li Xun Huan sighed, saying, "I hope you understand some things. One, men do not like to be passive. Two, you're not as pretty as you think."

The young woman bit her lips tightly, saying, "I give up. I beg of you to please remove your dagger now."

Li Xun Huan said, "I want to ask you one more thing."

"Go ahead."

Li Xun Huan said, "Many man would give anything you want. That's why you can't possibly be interested in treasures. So why are you so intent on having this vest?"

The young woman said, "I told you earlier, the harder to get, the more I want it."

Li Xun Huan thought for a moment, then said, "Even if I don't take the dagger off your neck, do you think you can move your neck away from my dagger?"

That young woman immediately left his arms, like a cat suddenly hurt.

After a while, she smiled again, "I knew all along that you couldn't bring yourself to kill me."

"Really? Why?"

He's still holding the dagger, saying, "If you don't leave by the time I finish this sentence, I'll kill you, do you believe me?"

The young woman stopped talking.

She picked up her cloths and dashed out.

Only to hear her scream in a loathing manner, “Li Xun Huan, you’re not a man, you’re not even a human being! You’re useless, no wonder your fiancée ran away with your best friend. Now I know why!”

Snow filled the land. Under the snowy light, the outside is beautiful. Yet this kitchen remains like a tomb, making people wish to leave immediately.

Yet Li Xun Huan still sat there quietly, very still.

His eyes filled with anguish and misery. That young woman’s words, are like needles, stabbing deeply into his heart.

My fiancée.. My best friend...

Chapter 5: Chase on a Snowy Night

Li Xun Huan picked up the wine bottle, finishing the rest of the wine, then just kept coughing and coughing, pale white face showing a blood-red color. His hand holding his chest, talking to himself, "Xiao Yun, ShiYin. I would never blame you two. No matter what others say, I still do not blame you, because you did nothing wrong, all the mistakes were made by myself alone."

Suddenly, the wooden door slammed open.

A person crawled into the room, he's like a meatball, full of fat on his body. His hair and mustache look horrible, as if he hasn't bathed in years. One can smell his stink from miles away.

He crawled into the room, because his legs are broken.

Li Xun Huan raised his eyebrows, saying, "If you're here to beg for food, you've come at a bad time."

This person didn't hear him. The person might be handicapped, but his movement is still very fast, one quick roll and he arrived in front of the fireplace.

Li Xun Huan asked, "Are you also here for the Golden Thread Vest?"

This person's hand gave a push, and he arrived at the corpse. Of course, the vest is on this corpse.

Li Xun Huan said coldly, "The dagger in my hand is quite capable of killing. If you do not stop, I'm afraid there will be an extra corpse in this room."

This person still did not listen, proceeded to take off the Golden Thread Vest. It only looks like a gold-colored vest, without any mysteriousness to it.

Only to see this person holding the vest tightly, laughing out loud. "When snipe and oyster fight, the fisherman gets the award*. I can't believe this treasure is in my hands now."

*[The above saying means that when two powerful parties fight each other over something, it's the third party that wins by coming in after the first two parties are both deeply wounded from fighting each other. Or something like that...]

Li Xun Huan said coldly, "My dagger is still here. I'm afraid your words might've spoken too soon."

This person again bounced with his hands like a toad towards Li Xun Huan, smiling as he looked at Li Xun Huan. His teeth all yellow.

He chuckled as he spoke, "Since you have the dagger, why don't you kill me? Little Li's Flying Dagger never misses. If you simply use your dagger, there's no way I, a handicap, can possibly dodge it."

Li Xun Huan also smiled, saying, "I think you're interesting, so I can't bring myself to kill you."

This strange person laughed a few times, then said, "If you don't want to say the truth, I'll say it for you."

He then continued while laughing, "Everyone else might

think you weren't poisoned, but I know you were. Except you're very calm, so you were able to fool everyone else."

Li Xun Huan still did not change his expression. "Really?"

This strange person said, "But you can't possibly fool me, because I know that the poison in the wine has no color nor taste. Even if your nose can smell better than a dog's, you still can't smell the poison."

Li Xun Huan looked at him for a long time, then showed a faint smile. "Are you really this clear on the whole matter?"

This strange person chuckled again. "Of course I'm sure, because I put the poison into the wine. I can obviously tell whether you've been poisoned or not. You can fool everyone else, but not me."

Li Xun Huan's expression still did not change. But the muscles around his eyes are already starting to move, after a long time, he let out a sigh, saying, "It's been less than a day, yet I already met six seven big events. Looks like my luck is pretty good."

This strange person said, "You mean you don't want to know whose hands you'll die under?"

Li Xun Huan answered, "I was just about to ask."

This strange man said, "You're so knowledgeable, so you should know that there are 7 most devious people in the martial world."

Li Xun Huan shockingly said, "Seven Ingenious People"

This strange person said, "Correct. These seven people really are treacherous to the extreme. Their kung fu might

not be top notch, but when it comes to poison, stealing, scheming and lying, their skills have no equal.”

Li Xun Huan lit up his eyes. “So are you one of the Seven Ingenious People?”

This strange person said, “The most devious of the Seven Ingenious People is...”

Li Xun Huan said, “Flower Bee Ingenious Gentleman.”

This strange person said, “Almost right. His full name is the ‘Black Heart Ingenious Gentleman’. This person’s abilities are quite limited. He’s a coward, even afraid to do much stealing and womanizing. Yet when it comes to poisons, even that famous 5-Poison Kid has to call him Grandfather sometimes.”

Li Xun Huan said, “You sure know a lot about this person.”

That strange person answered, “Of course. Because he is me, and I am him.”

Li Xun Huan sighed, shutting up.

Flower Bee[I swear to God this name doesn’t sound this stupid in Chinese] laughed, “Are you so surprised that an Ingenious Gentleman is a chubby meatball?”

Li Xun Huan said, “If you are capable on seducing woman, then those woman must be blind.”

Flower Bee said, “You’re wrong again. Not only are they not blind, their eyes are also very pretty. Except if a person has been locked up, with his feet broken, with only fatty food everyday for years, then they have to become meatballs.”

Li Xun Huan said, "I take it this is the work of Sun Kui couple."

Flower Bee thought for a while, then smiled. "Sun Kui told you a story earlier. I'll tell you another story. Except mine is a lot more interesting."

"Really?"

Flower Bee continued, "That year I had some really bad luck. I was so into woman at the time that I seduced Big Beard's wife [Ms. Qiang Wei from the previous chapter], and even had a child. So she had to run away with me."

Li Xun Huan's shocked. "So the person he said was you? He's the one who paid for your mistake?"

Flower Bee said, "He lied a little bit. I did not steal her treasures. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't. She's too cunning for me to do so. However, we really were being chased by Big Beard. I've always been a coward, so I persuaded her to find someone to take my place for a moment. She hesitated at first, saying Sun Kui's face isn't white enough. But later agreed."

Li Xun Huan said, "So you two planned the whole thing."

Flower Bee continued, "If I had really left her then, everything would've been ok. But I really couldn't give up her treasures, so I said that once everything's calm again, we'd kill him and get back together. Who would've thought that she fell in love with him. And they end up breaking my feet, then jailed me like this for almost twenty years."

Li Xun Huan asked, "Why didn't she kill you?"

Flower Bee said, "If I knew how a woman thinks, then I wouldn't be in this state. You know, I used to think I knew women's hearts. That's why I ended up like this. If a man thinks he understands women, then he should accept whatever problems that might cause him."

Li Xun Huan said, "This is indeed a great story."

"But you haven't heard the most interesting thing yet."

"What would that be?"

Flower Bee said, "After you've been poisoned, not only can you not use your flying dagger, you can't even live for more than six hours. That's why I won't kill you now, since I want you to know how it feels to wait for your death."

Li Xun Huan calmly said, "This really isn't necessary. I've waited for my death many times."

Flower Bee laughed, "But I can promise this is the last time."

Li Xun Huan laughed a bit too. "If that's the case, then I have nothing more to say. Except there's much wind and snow outside, so how are you going to travel?"

Flower Bee said, "You don't have to worry about this. My legs might be broken, but I can still ride a horse."

"In that case, travel safely. I'm sorry I can't see you out the door."

But by that time, the sound of the horse steps is starting to disappear."

Li Xun Huan sat there and smelled the wine. "It really does have no smell and no taste. His poison skills really are

quite good.”

He drank another cup, then closed his eyes. “But this wine really is good. I’ll die from one cup. I’ll also die from one bottle. Why not drink the whole thing?”

So he drank the whole bottle of poisonous wine.

He then started to speak to himself. “Oh, Li Xun Huan. You should’ve been dead a long time ago. What’s wrong with dying? But you really should not die in a kitchen, with these corpses.”

So he got up, and wobbly made his way towards the door.

The footprints on the snow crossed each other, heading southeast.

Li Xun Huan picked the cleanest part of the field, sat down, then took out that unfinished human figure.

The figure just stared at Li Xun Huan.

Li Xun Huan suddenly laughed, saying, “Why do you still look at me? I’m just a hopeless loafer, drunk. You did the right thing by marrying Xiao Yun. Only I’m wrong.”

He tried to use his dagger to finish the figure.

But he doesn’t have the energy anymore.

Li Xun Huan kept coughing and coughing. Each cough seems to yell

“Shi Yin, Shi Yin.”

Can Shi Yin hear him?

There's no chance for Shi Yin to hear him. However, someone else heard him.

The driver carried Li Xun Huan on his back, furiously running through the woods.

"If we can find a broken-foot man who look like a meatball in 2 hours, I might have a chance to live. Because the person who applied the poison must also have the antidote."

This is the last sentence Li Xun Huan has the energy to say.

The driver used every ounce of his energy, his tears became ice, welcoming the dagger-like wind.

Suddenly, a sound came from afar.

The driver hesitated, then started to run towards the sound. He first found a horse by the road. He did not see Flower Bee. Because he only saw Flower Bee's corpse.

On his body were countless hidden weapons of all sorts. The driver could not help but feel bad for him. But then he remembered the matter at hand.

He quickly asked, "Is this the person?" He's still hoping against hope that this corpse is not the person Li Xun Huan needs to see.

Li Xun Huan replied, "Correct."

The driver bit his teeth, took off his coat and put by a tree. Then he sat Li Xun Huan down. "The antidote maybe on him. Let me check."

Li Xun Huan said, "Be careful. Don't get scraped by the

hidden weapons.”

Even when his own life is in jeopardy, he still thinks of others first.

The driver felt hot blood rising from his stomach, then forced himself to hold down the tears, trying his best to look for the antidote on the body.

After a long time, he finally stood up again.

Li Xun Huan said, “No antidote.”

By this time, the driver is tongue-tied, unable to speak.

Li Xun Huan smiled, saying, “Actually, I should’ve known that after all these years of imprisonment, he can’t possibly have any antidote on him.”

The driver tightened his fist. Then started to hit his own head, saying, “If only I knew who killed him... Maybe that person took the antidote.”

Li Xun Huan closed his eyes, his face very heavy, “Maybe... maybe not.”

The driver said, “Unfortunately, these hidden weapons are very common. Many people can use them.”

“Yeah”

The driver added, “He has so many hidden weapons on him, meaning that more than one person is involved.”

“Yeah”

His breathing slowed, as if he’s asleep. He worries so much for others’ safety, yet care so little for his own life.

The driver continues to hit his hand, suddenly jumped up.
“Yes! I know who killed him!”

“Huh?”

The driver ran to Li Xun Huan’s side. “Only person killed him. One person fired all thirteen types of hidden weapons.”

“Huh?”

The driver continued, “There are thirteen types of hidden weapons on him. Any single one could’ve taken his life. For a person to be this vicious and mad, you can’t find a second person on this Earth.”

Li Xun Huan sighed. “You’re right. There’s only one. Thousand Hand Luo Cha [Sorry I can’t find a way to translate ‘lou cha’. The person’s not important anyway]. Looks like Flower Bee still died in the hands of a woman.”

The driver added, “Other than her, no one else can fire thirteen different hidden weapons at the same time.”

He suddenly stopped, then said. “You should’ve figured it all out a long time ago.”

Li Xun Huan’s lips showed a hint of a bitter smile, saying, “What does it matter if I noticed or not? Thousand Hand Luo Cha travels mysteriously, she’s long gone by now. No reason to go after her.”

The driver said, “But we must find her no matter what.”

Li Xun Huan shook his head, saying. “Don’t bother. If you can just find me some wine, let me die drunk, and I’ll forever thank you. I’m so very, very tired. I really just want

to rest peacefully.”

The driver knelt onto the ground, no longer able to hold his tears, “Young master, I know you’re tired. In all these years, you’ve never been happy, sadness and hardship, really does make tire a person easily.”

He suddenly started to hold Li Xun Huan’s face, saying out loud, “But young master you cannot die, you must gather your energy. If you die with everyone thinking you’re really a loafer, a drunk, old master[Li Xun Huan’s dad] would not rest peacefully in the underworld.

Li Xun Huan closed his eyes tightly, tears already becoming ice.

Yet he’s still smiling, saying, “Loafer, alcoholic, they’re not so bad. At least better than those fake gentleman, right?”

The driver’s face is still full of tears, saying, “But... but young master you should have the best reputation in the world. Your kindness no one can compare. Why do you torture yourself? Is it worth it for that Lin Shi Yin woman?”

Light suddenly shot out of Li Xun Huan’s eyes, angrily said, “Quiet. You have the guts to say her her name?”

The driver lowered his head again, saying, “I’m sorry.”

Li Xun Huan stared at him for a while, then closed his eyes again. “Alright. If you want to find her, we’ll go look. The world is so big, and we have so little time. Where should we go?”

The driver immediately stood up again. “The Heavens help those with bitter heart, we’ll certainly find her.”

Just as he’s about to carry Li Xun Huan on his back, a snow

fell from the tree, falling on him. When he tried to get it off, he found blood on it.

There's actually a person on the tree.

A dead person. A dead woman.

She was stuck on the trunk, her body already frozen. With a short sword stuck to her chest, nailing her to the tree.

The two people only noticed the corpse on the ground, but did not see the corpse on the tree. The driver, like an eagle, went up to bring her back to the ground.

Only to see her face covered with ice, so people cannot tell her age. But can tell that she was very pretty before death.

Li Xun Huan suddenly laughed. "I guess Heaven really did sort of helped us find her."

The driver tightened his fists, saying harshly, "I heard that Thousand Hand Luo Cha is extremely vicious, yet after this person killed her, why did he take off her clothes?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Probably because her clothing are worth so much."

The driver's eyes suddenly brightened. "You're right. Rumor has it that she really cared about her clothing. Her clothes are made of gold, plus it's full of expensive jewelry."

Li Xun Huan laughed bitterly. "If deer horns weren't so valuable, and if deers didn't have horns, then they wouldn't be killed by hunters."

"Yet this person came for this priceless Golden Thread

Vest, but still could not pass over a far less valuable clothing. There's only one person this greedy."

Li Xun Huan said, "You're right. I also think there's only one."

This driver hurriedly chimed in. "Hands in Casket, 'Die for Money'."

Li Xun Huan said, "Take out that sword."

This sword is quite intricate, plus it has some jade designs.

Li Xun Huan added, "Yao Xian views money as life, so how could he possibly leave such a precious weapon here?"

The driver thought a moment, then said, "There aren't many such precious weapons in the world, could this be the work of Fan Xiao An?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Yes. They worked together."

The driver said, "One person views money as his life, the other views money as dirt, the two have totally different personalities. So how could they get together?"

Li Xun Huan laughed. "Mr. Fan is famous for being extravagant at everything, clothing, food, living, traveling. Yao Xian following him can get endless benefits, why not?"

The driver's face suddenly lit up, saying proudly, "This is great. In this horrible weather, Fan Xiao An would not ride a horse, and definitely won't walk. He must be in a carriage. If he's in a carriage, then we can catch him."

There really are wheel marks outside on the road. They really are traveling by carriage.

This type of carriage is quite comfortable, but not fast.

The driver ran with all his might. Even with a person on the back, he still moves fluidly and quickly. No one would believe that a person with such great lightness kung fu would be servant. Plus, a person with such lightness kung fu must be quite famous.

After a while, he suddenly found that the tracks ended. The lack of marks showed that no one had traveled through here for at least four to six hours.

He then noticed a side road. He did not think much of this side road before, as it seems to lead to a grave of a very rich person.

He followed this side road. It is indeed a dead end.

The carriage is in front of the grave. The horses are gone. Three people with sheepskin coats lie on the ground. In the cart is a person wearing neat clothes, white-faced, looks about forty, yet still shaved cleanly.

Just looking at his incredibly expensive ring showed that he must be Fan Xiao An.

There are two women by his side, all died the same way, their fatal pressure point heavily sealed.

Who did this?

The driver said, "Could this be the work of Yao Xian?"

Before he finished this sentence, another body appeared from the grave. His head bald, face facing the ground. Only his two hands are holding... like he was trying to hold something before death, but didn't succeed.

This is Yao Xian. However, he'll never be able to take any more things from caskets.

Li Xun Huan said, "It doesn't matter if a person gambles or visit brothels, but he really should not make friends with the wrong people. Or they'd end up like Fan Xiao An, not even knowing who kill him before dying."

"But"

Li Xun Huan continued, "Other than Fan Xiao An, everyone else are astonished. They wouldn't believe Yao Xian could possibly do this. Especially these two women, who might've even had some intricate relationship with Yao Xian before death. So they really could not believe this."

The driver suddenly said, "I heard that Yao Xian's finger technique was number one in the Shan Xi province, used to be called 'One Finger Chase Soul'. Looks like this really is his work. But..."

Li Xun Huan then added. "Yao Xian's probably been with Fan Xiao An for quite a while now. This time Fan Xiao An wants the Golden Thread Vest, Yao Xian wants to continue leech off of Fan Xiao An, so he went along with it. Who would've thought that the vest can be so alluring. Yao Xian stopped caring about friendship and killed them."

"But he's dead too."

Li Xun Huan laughed. "Maybe when he's killing, someone nosy was watching from this grave. Yao Xian saw him and wants to kill him to close his mouth. Who would've figured that he couldn't close that person's mouth, but instead got killed."

“But Yao Xian’s kung fu is quite good, who can possibly kill him?”

He moved closer to the grave, then found that there’s no wound on the body. Only his throat has added a hole.

Li Xun Huan’s still on the driver’s shoulder. Two people looked for a moment, then both sighed, yet the corner of their mouth showed hint of a smile. Both said together, “Looks like its him.”

The driver laughed, “Master Fei’s sword is faster than flying, no wonder Yao Xian couldn’t defend himself.”

Li Xun Huan closed his eyes, smiling. “Very good. Very good. The vest has finally found a proper owner with him. Now the Plum Flower Bandit should be caught.”

The driver then said, “Let’s look for Master Fei. He couldn’t possibly be gone long.”

Li Xun Huan asked, “Why bother?”

“To find the antidote.”

Li Xun Huan said, “If Flower Bee really had the antidote, and has been taken away, then Yao Xian must still have it. Ah Fei would never take another person’s item. He took away the Golden Thread Vest, but only because he thinks the vest belongs to me.”

The driver looked at all the jewelry on Fan Xiao An and those two women, then sighed. “You’re right. Even if ground is filled with gold, Master Fei would still not pick them up.”

“That’s why if Yao Xian doesn’t have it, then its useless to

look for Ah Fei.”

So the driver picked up the body. This is really his last chance.

He then noticed words on the wall.

“I helped you get revenge,

I rode your horse.”

Li Xun Huan burst out laughing. “I originally figured it was him. Now I’m certain. Only Ah Fei would not even let a dead person owe him.”

He continued with a bright smile. “This child really is lovely. Unfortunately I...”

He did not finish the sentence, yet the driver know what he wanted to say, looks like the antidote is not here either.

It’s unfortunate that he’ll never see this lovely kid ever again.

The driver no longer has any more energy left. He’s almost about to fall.

Li Xun Huan is still smiling, though. “You don’t have to worry about me. Death is not as bad as you think. Now that I have no energy, I feel rather peaceful, just wanting to have some wine.”

Chapter 6: Saviour at Drunken Homeland

The driver suddenly jumped up, took off his shirt, then welcomed the snow and wind with his bare chest.

Like a horse he started to pull the carriage.

Li Xun Huan did not stop him, because he knows that the driver needs a place to vent his frustrations. But as the carriage door closed, Li Xun Huan still could not help but shed a tear.

After an hour, they arrived at Cow village.

Cow village is a very tight little town. It's not dark yet, but the snow has stopped. Every household is trying to shove away the snow in their front yard.

But when they saw the driver pulling the carriage running into town, they were astonished. Some even got scared and ran back to their homes.

Of course there's a wine store in this town.

The people here have never seen anyone with such strength. So as the driver walked up to the wine store, most of the customers got scared and left.

The driver put three chairs together. Then put a clean cloth on the chairs. Then carried Li Xun Huan into the store, so he can sit comfortably.

Li Xun Huan looks as if he has no blood left on his face. So everyone can see that he is seriously ill. The store has opened for twenty years, yet has never seen a person about to die to come drink wine. Everyone just stared at him.

The driver hit the table hard, yelling loudly, "Get me some wine. Your very best! If you watered it down just a little bit, I'll take your heads."

Li Xun Huan looked at him, then smiled. "You know, for the past twenty years, only today did you show the character of 'Iron Armor Golden Steel'."

The driver's body flinched, as if he was shocked by this title. Yet he still managed to laugh loudly. "I can't believe young master you still remember this name. I already forgot."

Li Xun Huan said, "You... you should break your resolution and have a drink today."

The driver said, "Alright! Today however much young master drink, I'll match."

Li Xun Huan also laughed along loudly. "The fact that I can make you drink again means that I didn't live this life in vain."

Others, seeing at them laugh so happily, couldn't help but look their way. No one can figure out how a near-death person can be so happy.

The wine isn't the best, but at least its not watered down.

The driver said, "Young master, allow me to be so bold, I wish to propose a toast to you."

Li Xun Huan was about to drink to it, but he couldn't hold his cup firmly, wine spilled out. As he coughs, he also tried to get the wine off his shirt, yet still laughing, "I've never spilled wine before, but today..."

He laughed again, "This shirt has been with me for so many years, I really should reward it with some wine. Come, brother shirt, thank you for providing me with warmth all these years, I give you a toast."

He then poured the rest of the wine on his own shirt.

The manager and the workers looked at him, saying to themselves, "This person's not only ill, he's also crazy."

The two kept on drinking and drinking, with Li Xun Huan must use both hands to hold the cup firmly.

The driver then hit the table again. "Life is so unfair. If only I would never awaken from being drunk. Unfortunately, unfortunately..."

Li Xun Huan said, "you should be happy today. What's all this 'unfair', 'never awaken' stuff? One should just live life the fullest [Excuse me for not really translating this proverb. I don't even understand it fully myself.]"

The driver laughed once more. "You're Right, Right!" Then his face hit the table with a thud.

Li Xun Huan's face is filled with gratitude, saying to himself, "These twenty years, if it weren't for you, I... I probably would not have survived. Although I know your reasons, but doing this really is beneath you. Hopefully you can reclaim your status and fame of old. If so, although I..."

The driver suddenly jumped up again, saying, "Young

master you should not say such unpleasant words, ruining the mood.”

They suddenly laugh and suddenly cry, both cry and laugh.

The manager and the workers looked at each other. “Looks like they’re both crazy.”

At this instant, they heard person rushing in, “Wine. Wine. Get me some wine quickly.”

From his look, it seems that he’d die if not drink immediately.

The manager said to himself, “Looks like another crazy person.”

Only to see this person wear a blue shirt that’s been washed to the point its now white. His nails filled with dirt. Although wearing a scholarly hat, his hair is all messed up. His face looks both yellow and thin. A look of a poor scholar.

The worker brought a bottle of wine.

Who’d have thought that this poor scholar would not use a cup, instead holding the bottle and already drank over half of it, but then blew it back out again, yelling, “You call this wine? This is vinegar, plus it’s watered down vinegar...”

That worker said, “Its not that we don’t have good wine, but...”

That poor scholar said, “You think I don’t have money? Here, take this.”

He just waved his hand, and gave 50 teals of silver.

Every customer and worker are incredibly shocked. So this time they brought out the best wine.

Again, the poor scholar did not bother with cups, and drank the whole bottle in one gulp. Then just sat there without moving. Everyone else figured he must've drank too fast and something happened. But Li Xun Huan knows that he's just savoring the taste.

After a while, he finally let out a breath. His eyes and face bright now. "Although the wine sucks, at a place like this, I guess I can't expect anything better."

The manager laughed along, saying, "I've been saving that bottle for over ten years now."

The scholar suddenly hit the table, saying, "No wonder the taste is not thick [I've always thought wine tastes thicker as it ages, or does it not? I'm confused], give me some newer wine, only fermented three levels, then bring some food to go with the wine."

"What kind of food do you want?"

"I know that in a crappy place like this, you can't bring out anything good. Just get me a Wind Chicken and spicy fried crow intestine [yuck!], make sure the intestine's very spicy and there's no feather on the chicken."

This person looks really poor, yet he really knows how to eat and drink. Li Xun Huan couldn't help but find him really interesting. Under normal circumstances, he would at least ask this person to drink with him. But now, he might fall at any time. So he doesn't want to meet any more people.

That person just kept drinking alone, drinking very fast.

It seems that other than wine, nothing else matters to him.

At this time, the sound of horses came, and stopped in front of the store. This person's face suddenly changed a bit.

He got up ready to leave. Then looked at the wine on the table, then sat down again. Drinking three more cups while savoring the intestines.

Only to hear someone say, "What a drunkard, where do you think you're going?"

Another person said, "I told you we can find him in a wine store."

At this time, five six people came in, surrounding the poor scholar. They all look like they have pretty good kung fu.

A tall, thin man with a horse whip pointed at the poor scholar's nose saying, "You took our gold, yet you won't cure illness for us, escaped to here to drink, what the hell's going on?"

The poor scholar smile, "So you don't understand what's going on? It's just that I needed a drink. You should know that when Mr. Mei Er* needs a drink, he doesn't even care if the sky falls, much less someone's illness."

*[The word 'Er' here is the number 2. So Mr. Mei Er means his last name is 'Mei', and he's the second child in the family.]

A dot-faced guy said, "Big brother Zhao, did you here? We already know this drunkard is a horrible person. Once the

money's on his hand, he no longer cares about others."

The first man said, "Who doesn't know this drunkard's personality? But he must cure the fourth brother's illness. We needed to find a doctor, so what else could we have done?"

Li Xun Huan originally figured these people came for revenge, now after hearing their conversation, knows that this Mei Er is a doctor who just takes money but doesn't cure patients.

While these people kept yelling, he still kept sitting very still. Simply kept drinking.

Zhao threw out his whip, hitting the wine bottles and cups, yelling, "Stop procrastinating, since we found you, you better come with us to help the patient. If the fourth brother gets well again, I'm guarantee you'll have plenty of wine to drink"

That Mr. Mei Er just looked at the broken wine cups, took a deep sigh, then said, "Since you know about my temper, you should know that I won't treat three types of people."

"Which three?"

"Number one, I don't treat those who don't pay up front. If they pay a penny less, I won't cure them."

One of the man said, "We gave you plenty of money!"

Mr. Mei Er continued, "Number two, I don't treat those who are rude to me. Number three, I most certainly don't treat thugs, thieves, and killers."

He then sighed, shaking his head. "You broke the last two rules, yet still expect me to treat him? You're dreaming."

Those people said, "If you don't treat him, then we'll kill you."

"Even if you kill me I still won't treat him!"

The dot-faced guy went up and hit him, sending him flying into the air, blood coming out of his mouth.

Li Xun Huan originally figured this doctor was hiding his skills. Now he knows that the doctor might have a tough mouth, but not a tough body.

Big brother Zhao took out his knife, saying, "If you say the 'no' word half more time, I'll first cut off an arm before talking again."

Mr. Mei Er said, "When I say no I meant no. Why would I be afraid of little thugs like you guys?"

Big brother Zhao wanted to go forward, but the driver suddenly hit the table, speaking loudly, "This is a place to drink wine, if you're not here to drink, leave immediately!"

This sound was loud as thunder, scaring even Zhao. "Who the hell are you? You dare to butt in on my business?"

Li Xun Huan smiled, saying, "Having them just leave is no fun. Ask them to crawl out."

"Young master asked you people to crawl out. Heard him?"

Big brother Zhao saw that this person is ill and has no energy, plus extremely drunk, so he got up the courage to say, "Since you guys are so bold, let me cut you open."

His saber glowed, slicing towards Li Xun Huan.

The driver immediately extended his arms, trying to

intercept the saber. Yet he's already drunk, looking as if he's trying to catch the saber with his arm.

The manager got scared, thinking his arm would get chopped off. Who would've thought that while the arm stayed, the saber went into midair. Even Zhao was shocked big time, saying, "This person's kung fu can actually make him impenetrable by weapons, looks like we met a ghost."

The dot-faced guy also got scared, forcing a laugh while saying, "Please tell us your name, my friend. Looks like we need to fight to meet. Let's be friends from now on."

The driver said coldly, "You're not worthy of being my friend. Get out!"

Zhao jumped up, saying, "You should not be so rude. It's not good to make an enemy of us, if..."

Before he can finish, the dot-faced guy suddenly side something into Zhao's ear, looking at Li Xun Huan's dagger at the same time.

Zhao's face turned even whiter, saying, "It can't possibly be him."

"Who else can it be? I heard half a month ago from Old Turtle that he came back from the borders. Old Turtle remember him from a long time ago. He can't be wrong."

Zhao said, "But this drunkard..."

"This person's very into eating, drinking, women, and gambling, plus his health has never been good. But his dagger..."

When he got to saying this dagger, his voice changed.

“There’s no need to make enemy with someone like him.”

Zhao laughed, “If I knew he was here, even if someone put a knife on my neck, I still wouldn’t come in here.”

He then coughed twice and bowed while laughing. “Little me really has eyes but no eyeballs, didn’t recognize old man you. Sorry to intrude on old man your [you can tell I’m getting really lazy with all these ‘literal’ translations, eh?] drinking. Little man me really deserve to die. Now I’ll scram.”

It’s not clear whether or not Li Xun Huan heard him. He just kept drinking, kept coughing, as if nothing had happened.

Those men who came in like tigers, now had left quietly as dogs. It’s only now that Mr. Mei Er got up, yet he didn’t thank Li Xun Huan. Instead got up on the chair while yelling. “Wine! Give me some wine.”

The worker just looked confused, not believing that this was the person that just got whacked.

The other customers had already left by now, leaving only those three people. All drank continuously, not talking at all.

Li Xun Huan looked outside the window, suddenly smiling.”This wine thing is really peculiar. The more you want to stay awake, the quicker you become drunk. The more you want to be drunk, the more you can’t get drunk.”

Mr. Mei Er suddenly also chuckled, saying, “Getting drunk solves thousands of problems, It’s best to be drunk til death. But unfortunately, heaven would not let them die

so peacefully.”

The driver raised his eyebrows as Mei Er walked wobbly towards their table, looking at Li Xun Huan. “Do you know how much longer you live?”

“Not long.”

“If you know that you can’t live long, why don’t you take care the things necessary before death, instead coming here to drink?”

Li Xun Huan said, “Why should such unimportant things such as life and death get in the way of drinking?”

Mei Er clapped his hands, laughing. “Right. Right. Life and death is a small matter. Drinking is a major matter. Your words really fit my tastes.”

He then suddenly opened his eyes, saying, “I guess you know who I am now, right?”

Li Xun Huan replied, “Not yet.”

“You really don’t know me?”

The driver suddenly cut in. “If he says he doesn’t know then he really doesn’t know. Why so repetitive?”

Mr. Mei Er still stared at Li Xun Huan saying, “Looks like you didn’t save me to cure your illness.”

Li Xun Huan laughed. “If you want to drink some wine, we can drink together. If you’re here to treat an illness, then I suggest you leave. Don’t waste my drinking time.”

Mr. Mei Er continued to stare at Li Xun Huan for a long time, then said. “So lucky. So lucky. You know, you’re so

lucky you met me.”

Li Xun Huan said, “I have no money to pay. Plus I’m not much different from robbers and thieves. You can leave now.”

Who would’ve thought that Mei Er would shake his head saying, “No No No. It’s okay for me not to treat others’ illnesses. But I have to treat yours. If you don’t let me treat you, you have to kill me first.”

The driver suddenly lit up his eyes. “You really can cure him?”

Mr. Mei Er said, “Other than Mei Er, no one else in the world can treat him.”

The driver got up and tugged his shirt, asking, “Do you know what illness he has?”

Mr. Mei Er said, “If I don’t know then who would know? You really think Sixth brother Flower really can come up with that ‘Cold Chicken Powder’?”

“Cold Chicken Powder? The poison is Cold Chicken Powder?”

Mr. Mei Er chuckled. “Other than the Mei family ‘Cold Chicken Powder’, what other poison can possibly kill Li Xun Huan?”

The driver’s shocked and rejoiced. “You mean, Flower Bee’s poison was made by you?”

Mei Er laughed out loud. “Other than ‘Ingenious Middle Man’ Mr. Mei Er, who could possibly mix this poison? Looks like you are not knowledgeable at all, not knowing even

this.”

The driver’s now happy beyond belief. “So the poison was made by him! Young master, you’re saved!”

Li Xun Huan just laughed bitterly. “Looks like while it’s hard for a person to live, it’s also hard for him to peacefully die.”

They’re on the carriage again. The driver’s now taking care of Li Xun Huan but also keeping note of Mr. Mei Er.

He’s still not satisfied, asking, “If you can cure his poison, then why do you need to find someone else?”

Mr. Mei Er said, “I’m not looking for another person, just my big brother. He’s near. Don’t worry. If I say I would treat a person, then there’s no way that person can possibly die.”

“Why do you need to find him?”

“Because he has the antidote. Are you satisfied now?”

This time he really did shut up.

Mr. Mei Er shook his head laughing. “I can’t believe someone would practice a type of kung fu this stupid. Other than against some street thugs, its useless.”

The driver coldly replied, “Stupid kung fu is better than no kung fu.”

Oddly enough, Mr. Mei Er is not mad at all. He continued to smile. “I heard that to practice this kung fu, one must be a virgin. Don’t you think that this sacrifice might be a tad to much?”

“Humph”

Mei Er continued. “I heard that in the past fifty years, only one person was stupid enough to learn this kung fu. This person’s ‘Iron Armor Golden Steel’ Tie Zhuan Jia. But twenty years ago someone threw him over the cliffs, and no one knew from that point whether he’s alive or not. Maybe he didn’t die. Maybe he can still drink wine.”

It’s as if the driver’s mouth has been shut. No matter what Mei Er says or asks, he can’t respond.

Mr. Mei Er could only close his eyes, recovering some strength.

After a while, the driver opened his mouth again. “I heard that the ‘Seven Ingenious People’ all don’t care much for their faces [here it means reputation]. Yet you don’t look so.”

Mr. Mei Er said, “I took those people’s gold, then won’t agree to cure him. You think that’s not bad enough?”

“If you actually agreed to cure him, then you’ve really lost your face. Taking money can treating the patient are two different things. There’s no reason not to take money from those people.”

Mr. Mei Er said, “Looks like you’re not totally stupid.”

The driver then said, “Those that everyone thinks are devious might not all be devious. Yet of those people say are gentleman, how many really are gentleman?”

Li Xun Huan just sat on the chair smiling. As if he’s listening to the conversation, yet also seems to be wandering elsewhere.

Looking outside, the snow has turned everything white.

If one can stay alive, then it's still a good thing.

Another person's image suddenly appeared in Li Xun Huan's head.

She's wearing a purple dress. Plus she has a light purple cape over her shoulders. Standing in the pure white background, she looks like a pretty purple Luo Lan [I can't find this word in the dictionary. It seems to be the name of a flower, though.].

He remembers that she loves snow the most. Every time there's snow, she would pull him to the garden, hit him with a snowball, then dare him to catch her.

He remembers that day he took Long Xiao Yun home, it also snowed. She was sitting in the pavilion of the plum garden, looking at the snow on the plum trees.

He remembers that the columns are red. Yet as she's sitting by the columns, both the columns and the plum trees all lost their color.

He did not see Long Xiao Yun's reaction at that time. But later he can imagine, Long Xiao Yun's heart must've already been broken.

Now, is that pavilion still the same? Does she still sit there often, counting the plum flowers?

Li Xun Huan raised his and smiled towards Mr. Mei Er. "There's wine in the carriage. Let's have a drink."

Snow, fall sometimes stop sometimes.

Under the guidance of Mei Er, the carriage turned onto a

small road, up to a small bridge. Then can't cross over.

The driver carried Li Xun Huan over the bridge, only to see a shack within the plum forest. A sound suddenly came from the forest, as they got closer, a properly dressed man is telling two kids to pour water on the snow filled trees.

The driver said quietly, "This is Mr. Mei Da*?"

*['Da' means 'big'. In this case, it shows that he's the eldest child of the family.]

Mei Er replied. "Other than this idiot, who would use water to clean off the ice and snow on trees?"

The driver could not help but laugh. "You mean he doesn't know that he by pouring the water, snow will still remain the tree, while the water will become ice?"

Me Er sighed, laughing bitterly. "He can tell the authenticity of any artwork by one look. He can instantly mix the most potent poison and the most potent antidote. Yet he can't figure out some of the most basic logics."

As they speak, Mei Da turned his head to look at them, as if looking at a bunch of annoying kids, instantly losing the color on his face. Saying, "Hurry! Hurry up and hide all the precious paintings. Don't let him see it, then go trade it for some wine."

Mei Er smiled. "Big brother. Don't worry. I already had my wine today. I just came to bring two friends..."

Before he can finish, Mei Da already covered his eyes, saying, "I don't want to see your friends. Your friends are all terrible. If I see one, I'll be destined to have three years of bad luck."

Mei Er also became annoyed, saying, "Fine. You look down at me. You don't think I can possibly find any nice friend. Come, Li Tan Hua, let's leave."

The driver suddenly said, "Where's the antidote? How can we leave now?"

Who would've thought that Mei Da's expression suddenly changed. "You mean that family with seven members to pass the imperial examinations, father-son three people [the third person implies Li Xun Huan's brother] all became Tan Hua, THAT Li Tan Hua?"

Mei Er said coldly. "You know of another Li Tan Hua?"

Mei Da looked at Li Xun Huan. "This one?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Yes. I am the one."

Mei Da looked over him up and down, suddenly held his hand, laughing loudly. "Famous for twenty years, I can't believe I finally get to meet you. Brother Li."

He actually became extremely nice after knowing who the guest is.

Mei Da then said, "Mr. Li, please excuse my rude remarks earlier. It's just that much brother is so terrible. Two years ago, he led two people to my house, saying they're art aficionados. Who'd have thought that when I showed them my precious paintings, they exchanged two with blank papers! I was so pissed I couldn't sleep for three months."

Li Xun Huan laughed too. "Mr. Mei Da should not blame him. When one's drinking urges start to come out, yet don't have money for wine, that's also a very nasty feeling."

Mr. Mei Da said with a smile. "Looks like brother Li is also this type of person."

Li Xun Huan smiled along. "Drinking can make people be in heaven [this is a really bad translation of a proverb]."

Mei Da said, "Great. Qi He, stop with cleaning the tree. Go in and take that twenty yr old Zhu Ye Qing [A type of wine, roughly translated as 'green bamboo leaf']. Let brother Li here taste it. This wine's been in there for all these years, the purpose is to keep someone as famous as brother Li here."

Mei Er said, "This is actually quite true. When other guests come, not only does he not bring out wine, he doesn't even bring out vinegar. However, brother Li is not here to drink wine."

Mei Da just needed to take one look at Li Xun Huan, then said, "The poison is a small problem. Brother Li just don't worry and drink. I know how to take care of the other things."

After three rounds, Mei Da suddenly asked, "I heard that the extremely rare 'Qing Ming Da He Tu' [must be a famous painting, but I've never heard of it] is in your mansion. Is this true?"

Now Li Xun Huan knows why he's so eager to greet them. "It is true."

Mei Da became happy beyond belief. "So can you bring it over sometime for me to look at?"

Li Xun Huan replied, "If Mr. Mei Da wanted to see it, I really should not refuse. But alas, I gave the painting, as well as the rest of my property, to someone else."

Mr. Mei Da looked as if someone hit him on the head with a stick. Just kept mumbling, “so unfortunate... so unfortunate...”

Then he said, “Qi He, put away the rest of the wine. Li Tan Hua here is done drinking.”

Mei Er said, “So without ‘Qing Ming Da He Tu’, there’s no wine?”

Mei Da said coldly, “My wine’s not here for people to drink.”

Not only is Li Xun Huan not mad, he actually smiled. He feels that while this person is extremely fickle, he’s also quite innocent, at least better than those fake gentlemen.

But the driver couldn’t hold his thoughts, yelling loudly, “So if there’s no ‘Qing Ming Da He Tu’, there’s no antidote?”

Mei Da said, “If there’s no wine, where does the antidote come from?”

The driver became very angry, wanting to run towards him.

But Li Xun Huan held him back, saying, “Mei Da and we are strangers, so he has no obligation to give us the antidote. We already owe him some great wine. How can we still be so rude?”

“But young master you... you...”

Li Xun Huan waved his hand and smiled. “I think it’s time for us to leave now.”

Who'd have thought Mei Da would ask, "You don't want the antidote?"

Li Xun Huan said, "We each have our own things. I never like to force people."

Mei Da said, "You do realize that without the antidote, you're dead."

"Life and death are decided by the heavens. I personally never cared much for it."

Mei Da then stared at him again, saying, "Right. Right. If one can even give 'Qing Ming Da He Tu' to someone else, why would he care for his own life? People like this really are rare, Really are rare..."

He then yelled, "Qi He, bring out the wine again."

The driver instantly became happy again. "So what about the antidote?"

Mei Da looked at him for a second, then coldly said, "Now that there's wine, you're afraid there would be no antidote?"

Chapter 7: Accidentally Hurting Friend's Son

After Li Xun Huan drank the wine, the antidote worked even faster. After twelve hours, Li Xun finds his energy gradually recovering.

By now it's almost dawn again. The driver did not sleep at all, but he's still in high spirits, except he drank way too much, so his head hurts a bit.

Mr. Mei Er starts to hit his own head. "Damn. Damn. It's morning already."

"What's wrong with morning?"

Mr. Mei Er said, "The thing I hate the most when I drink is dawn. If it's not bright outside, I can drink forever, but once I see the light, I just can't drink anymore."

Li Xun Huan was originally resting, but just now smiled. "It's not just you. Probably every alcoholic has this problem."

Me Er said, "In that case, before it gets too bright, lets hurry up and drink some more."

Li Xun Huan laughed. "At the speed you and I are drinking, I'm afraid your brother would be annoyed."

Mei Er said, "That's why he already went to sleep. If he doesn't see it happening, he won't get restless."

As Li Xun Huan was about to drink again, he started to cough.

Mei Er stared at him, suddenly asked, "How long have you had this cough?"

"I think over ten years."

Mei Er thought for a moment, then said, "If that's the case, you should not drink anymore. Too much coughing hurts your liver, if you keep drinking..."

Li Xun Huan said with a laugh. "Hurt my liver? How? My liver is already wasted."

He suddenly stopped talking, his eyes moving around, then said quietly, "Someone's coming."

Mei Er said, "Anyone who comes at this hour cannot be my brother's customers. They're probably here for me."

Actually he only heard the sounds now. And there's more than one person. All their footsteps are very light.

Only to hear someone speak loudly, "Is this the Mei family's clinic?"

After a while, they heard Mei Da's voice. "To come at this time of the night, are you robbers or thieves?"

That person answered, "We're here to visit. Not only are we not here to rob or steal, we even have a present."

Mei Da laughed coldly. "To present a gift at this hour? You people can't have any good intentions. Please leave now."

That person laughed, "If that's the case, I'm afraid I'll have

to take this Wang Muo Jie's painting back too."

Before he finished, the door opened.

Mei Er raised his eyebrows, saying, "These people checked out my brother's temper before coming. They obviously want something. Let's see what they're up to."

He didn't leave the room, instead just opened the door slightly to see who came.

He saw three people. The first looks to be around thirty. He looks short and mean. His eyes very bright. His hand holding a long box.

The second person's face look like a prune. His beard so long it reached his stomach. Wearing a purple overcoat. Looks very proud. Seems like someone with great leadership qualities.

Yet the third person is just a ten year old kid. Round face, round eyes, wearing a bright red shirt, his collars filled with rabbit fur, like a dressed up little red child.

Other than him, the other two both looked very worried and impatient.

That mean-looking person held the box, bowing in front of Mei Da saying, "This painting is bought by my master with thousands of taels of gold. It's been authenticated. Definitely real. Please take a look."

Mei Da's eyes had already been staring at the box for a long time now. Yet he just said, "You obviously aren't giving it to me for free. What do you want?"

That person smiled. "We just want the location of Mr. Mei Er."

Mei Da immediately let out a sigh of relief, saying, "This is easy."

He immediately snatched the box away from that person. Then yelled, "Second brother, come out. Someone wants to see you."

Mei Er sighed, shaking his head saying, "Bastard. Now that you have the painting, you don't even care for your brother."

The old man in purple and the mean-looking guy immediately saw Mei Er. Both let out looks of joy. Only that kid kept shaking his head, asking, "Look at this guy, does he look like he can cure illnesses?"

Mei Er responded, "Can't treat serious illnesses, won't kill those slightly ill. I'm halfway decent."

The old man in purple seems afraid that this kid would say something wrong again, immediately cut in, "I've long known that you have the 'hands that can return Spring', so I came here wishing that you may travel with me a bit. No matter how much money you ask for, I can pay immediately up front."

Mei Er laughed. "Looks like you're really familiar with my habits. Yet you're not afraid that I might run away?"

The old man in purple stopped talking, as if saying that Mei Er can't possibly escape.

That short guy then forced a laugh, saying, "If Mr. Mei Er would go, we have something extra to go along with the gold and silver."

Mei Er said, "Other than payment, you do realize that I

have another habit? Robbers I won't cure. Thieves I won't cure."

That short guy smiled while saying, "My name is Ba Ying, although I am a nobody, this person Qin Xiao Yi Master Qin is quite famous in the martial world. Mr. Mei Er should've at least heard of him, right?"

Mei Er said, "Qin Xiao Yi? You're 'Iron Courage Spread in Eight Directions' Qin Xiao Yi?"

Ba Ying said, "Right. That's my master."

Mei Er nodded his head, saying, "Looks like you're fairly famous. Fine. Come back a few days later and I might go with you."

Before he finished, the red kid already jumped up, yelling, "I can't believe this person's so arrogant. Hey, why are we wasting our breath talking to him? Just kidnap him and problem solved."

Ba Ying immediately tugged at the kid's shirt, forcing another smile. "If the illness is not so severe, then it would be ok to wait a few days. But forget a few days, we can't even wait a few more hours."

Mei Er said, "So your patient is important? But my patient is not important?"

Ba Ying said, "You mean Mr. Mei Er you have a patient here?"

"That's correct. Before I finish curing him, I can't leave."

Ba Ying stuttered, "But... but my patient is Master Qin's eldest son. He's also one of Shaolin's best disciples."

Mei Er also jumped up, saying, "So what if he's Qin Xiao Yi's son. So what if he's a Shaolin student. Are you saying his patient is more important than mine?"

By now Qin Xiao Yi's just full of anger, but can't say a word.

But that red kid's eyes rolled, suddenly said, "What if your patient is dead?"

Mei Er laughed coldly. "If he's dead, then I obviously no longer need to tend to him. Unfortunately, there's no way he can possibly die."

The red kid giggled, then said, "Don't be so sure."

He suddenly dashed into the inner room, quick as lightning. Even the driver was quite shocked. Ba Ying and Qin Xiao Yi looked at each other, but did not stop him.

When he entered the room, the red kid immediately looked at Li Xun Huan, saying loudly, "So you're the patient?"

Li Xun Huan smiled. "Little brother, you really want me to die quickly?"

The red kid said, "Correct. If you're dead, then that old geezer will treat brother Qin."

As he's speaking, three extremely small arrows shot out of his sleeves, aimed at Li Xun Huan's forehead and throat. It's speed and power are both very amazing.

No one would've thought that this ten year old kid would be this venomous. If the person here is not Li Xun Huan, then he probably would be dead by now.

But Li Xun Huan just casually waved his arms, catching the arrows. Then said, "You're still a kid and already so venomous, I can't believe what you'd become when you grow up."

The red kid laughed coldly. "You think that just because have some decent arrow-catching skills, that you can lecture me?"

He suddenly turned his body as he takes out a short sword. Before he finished the sentence, he already made seven strikes at Li Xun Huan.

Not only is this child fast and swift, he's also very venomous. Most experienced fighters would not be as good. He acts as if the other person is a mortal enemy, and would like nothing better than to poke a hole through Li Xun Huan with a sword.

Li Xun Huan said, "Looks like this kid would grow up to be another Yin Wu Ji*."

*['Yin' means dark. 'Wu Ji' sort of means no match.]

The driver said, "Although Yin Wu Ji has the 'Blood Sword' nickname, at least he has never killed an innocent. But this child..."

The red kid smiled deviously. "What about Yin Wu Ji. I've been killing since I was seven. What about him?"

Yet he saw that Li Xun Huan's still sitting there. So he varied his moves even more. He also became even deadlier.

Li Xun Huan smiled bitterly. "You're right. Even Yin Wu Ji probably was not this venomous when he was your age."

The driver's face became heavy. "If he were to grow up, he'd definitely be harmful to society. Maybe..."

The red kid has already made over a hundred moves yet still cannot win. Finally figured out that he has met a very powerful person in the martial world. He became so angry his eyes red. Biting his teeth, he said, "Do you know who my parents are? If you harm me, they'll cut you into a million pieces."

Li Xun Huan became very angry, saying, "In another words, only you can harm others. But they cannot harm you?"

The red kid said, "As long as you have the guts, you can go ahead and kill me."

Li Xun Huan hesitated for a moment. Then said, "I still don't want to kill you yet, because you're still young. With good upbringing you can still become a good person. Go now. Before I change my mind."

The red kid also knows that he probably can't win this time. Taking back his sword, he asked, "Your kung fu is really good. I wonder who you are? How come I've never seen you before?"

Li Xun Huan said, "You ask for my name. So you can get revenge?"

The red kid's face suddenly showed an incredibly innocent smile, saying, "You did not take my life, why would I seek revenge? I simply really respect you. I used one hundred and seven moves, yet you didn't even move."

Li Xun Huan's eyes suddenly brightened, asking, "Do you want to learn?"

The red kid became very happy, asking, "You really would let me be your disciple?"

Li Xun Huan smiled. "If I can help your parents watch over you, then you have a chance in the future."

Before he can finish, the red kid kneeled before him, saying, "Mentor above me, please allow your student a bow."

As the word 'bow' left his mouth, three bright light left his shirt's back.

This kid's whole body is filled with hidden weapons.

It's only now that Li Xun Huan totally became shocked. If he weren't so experienced, his reflexes quick as lightning, he probably would've died in this kid's hands by now.

The red kid saw that he still did not die, went up to Li Xun Huan again, yelling, "Who the hell do you think you are. You think you're worthy of watching over me for my parents? Worthy of taking me as your disciple?"

The driver's face became cold as ice, saying, "For a person with such a venomous heart, he can't be allowed to live!"

Li Xun Huan also sighed. His palm turned and shot out.

Qin Xiao Yi and Ba Ying both know perfectly well that the red kid is in there to kill someone. Yet they did not move a single inch.

Mei Da just stared blindly at the new painting, not caring about anything else in the world.

Mei Er on the other hand said, "The kid you brought here

is now trying to commit murder. Yet you don't care?"

Ba Ying held out his hands and smiled. "To tell the truth, even if we wanted to, we can't control him."

Mei Er smiled coldly, "But if he were to die today, would you care?"

Ba Ying won't answer, just kept smiling.

Mei Er said, "Looking at your expressions, I can see that you must feel his skills are quite good. So only he can kill others. Others can't possibly kill him, right?"

Ba Ying could not hold down a laugh. "To tell the truth, his kung fu really is pretty good. Many experienced experts has died in his hands. Besides, he has a great dad and a great mom. Even if someone else got screwed, they can't do anything about it."

"You mean his parents won't control him?"

"A kid this intelligent, his parent obviously don't want to watch over too tightly."

Mei Er said. "You're right. When his parents see him kill people, they might scold him a bit on the surface, but deep inside, they're actually happier than anyone else. Unfortunately, he met my patient today. This is his bad luck."

Mei Er continued, "All my patient has to do is wave his hand, and the child's life is gone."

Ba Ying laughed, "Just wave his hand and kill him? I don't think I believe you. You mean your patient can be like Li Tuan Hua, Flying dagger takes life, never miss?"

Mei Er sighed. "To tell the truth, my patient really is Li Xun

Huan.”

When this sentence came out, Ba Ying’s face became pure white. But still had a dry laugh. “Why do you... make such a joke?”

Mei Er said, “If you don’t believe me, just go see for yourself.”

Ba Ying suddenly dashed inside, yelling, “Hero Li, Li Tuan Hua, please spare his life!”

Mei Er sighed. “Looks like these self-proclaimed heroes aren’t really anything after all. Only their kids’ lives are valuable. Everyone else’s lives are worth nothing. Only they can kill others. Others can’t kill them.”

Qin Xiao Yi’s stern face suddenly seemed to show a flicker of smile.

He did his best to keep the smile down. Instead said, “If Li Xun Huan really did kill that child, then he’ll regret it for the rest of his life.”

As Li Xun Huan’s palm shot out, it appears to have no strange movement.

Although this red kid’s still small, he’s still very experienced. Even after seeing the palm, he still does not evade or block, thinking the opponent is using a decoy. That the real killer move is the next one. So he just kept on slicing with his sword.

Although his palms has no movement, the sword can change moves midway. Even if the palm hits, the kid’s sword can also hit Li Xun Huan.

His sword moves really are excellent. Very few people can

match his speed, power, precision, and timing. It's not that he had a great mentor. But rather he's naturally very talented.

Unfortunately, his opponent is Li Xun Huan.

Although this palm has no movement, but it's simply way too fast. Its speed beyond comprehension.

So no matter how many tricks the red kid has, he can't apply them. Before his sword reached Li Xun Huan, the palm already hit his chest.

Yet the little kid did not feel any pain. He just felt a strange sensation spreading across his body. As if he just drank some hot wine.

Only now did someone come from outside the door yelling, "Hero Li. Please do not hurt him!"

But by this time, the red kid is already on the ground. As if awakening from a stupor. His body so soft he can't move.

Ba Ying asked, "Young Master Yun, how are you feeling?"

The red kid also realizes things aren't going well, his eyes red. "I... I've probably been deeply wounded by this person. Hurry. Go tell my dad to seek revenge for me."

Before he finished, he started to cry loudly.

Ba Ying doesn't know what to do. Sweat poured down from his forehead.

The driver said coldly. "This child's kung fu has been wasted, but at least he's still alive. But only because my young master is so kind-hearted. If it were me..."

Ba Ying acted as if he didn't hear anything.

"If you want revenge, go ahead."

Ba Ying did not speak, but instead kneeled in front of Li Xun Huan.

Li Xun Huan suddenly became shocked, asking, "What's your relationship with this child?"

Ba Ying said, "My name is Ba Ying. Li Tan Hua obviously does not know me. But I know Li Tan Hua."

Li Xun Huan said, "It's best that you know me. If this child's parents want revenge, just tell them to come see me."

The red kid continued to cry loudly, yelling, "You're so mean! You dare to waste my kung fu. I don't want to live anymore... don't want to live anymore."

The driver spoke loudly. This is just to teach you not to hurt others later. If so, then you might live a bit longer. Otherwise, you'll probably die very quickly."

Only to hear a person say coldly, "If that's the case, then the cold-blooded Li Tan Hua, why haven't you died yet?"

"Who is it?"

Only to see an old man with a purple coat come in. "It's been ten years. You mean Li Tan Hua doesn't recognize me anymore?"

Li Xun Huan smiled, saying, "Oh, so it's 'Iron Courage spread in Eight Directions' Mr. Qin. No wonder this kid can kill without hesitation. With you along, who can't he kill?"

Qin Xiao Yi said coldly, "I'm afraid I've killed less than half of brother Li."

Li Xun Huan said. "Mr. Qin should not be so modest. Except, when I kill, it's because I'm a cold-hearted killer. When you kill, it's for the justice of the world!"

He snickered, then continued, "If this kid were to kill me, and words later spread. Obviously it won't be that he killed fighting over a doctor. It would instead be he and Hero Qin fighting evil together, right?"

Although Qin Xiao Yi is experienced and knows to keep a straight face, one can still see red coming out.

The red kid originally was listening intently. Now he started to cry again, yelling, "Uncle Qin. Why aren't you going to kill him as revenge?"

Qin Xiao Yi smiled coldly. "If someone else injured you, obviously someone would get you your revenge. But since this person hurt you, then you can't do a single thing about it."

The red kid said, "W...Why?"

Qin Xiao Yi looked at Li Xun Huan, then asked the red kid, "Do you know who he is?"

The red kid shook his head, saying, "I just know he's a ruthless thug!"

An evil smile appeared on Qin Xiao Yi's face. "He's the world famous 'Number one Saber Under Heaven' [a dagger is not a regular saber, but still classified as a one] Li Xun Huan. He's also your father's life and death sworn brother!"

When these words came out. The red kid was obviously shocked, but Li Xun Huan was even more shocked. “Who’s his dad?”

Ba Ying sighed, saying, “He’s Long Xiao Yun Fourth Master Long’s eldest child, Long Xiao Yun!”

[Ok. This pisses me off. The father and son has the EXACT same pinyin. Well, their tones are different. The father is of fourth tone, Xiao(4). His son has the third tone, Xiao(3). But still... Anyway, from now on, I’ll write a number after the word Xiao to indicate who I’m talking about. If anyone has a better idea, feel free to tell me. It’s annoying having to type a number with the words. But I have no imagination, so can’t think of anything better.]

At that moment, Li Xun Huan’s soul seemed to have left him for a moment. His eyes kept moving. Tears started to fall.

The driver also changed his expression. Sweat came pouring out.

He knows the most about the Long Xiao4 Yun & Lin Shi Yin couple’s relationship. Now Li Xun Huan actually hurt their child, it’s clear how badly he feels.

Ba Ying said, “I really didn’t expect this. It all started when Master Qin’s son wanted to capture the Plum Flower Bandit. Unfortunately he got hurt from the encounter. With our best medicines, we managed to extend his life. But he still needs more help to live. We know that ‘Ingenious Doctor’ Mr. Mei Er is the number one wound doctor in the world, especially when it comes to wounds from hidden weapons. That’s why master came here. Who would’ve thought that this would happen.”

He's just speaking to himself, with no one else listening.

Mei Er also seems to have noticed the pain on Li Xun Huan's face. He looked at the red kid's wound. Then stood up. "I promise this child not only is not in danger, he can do anything a normal person can do in the future."

"What about martial arts?"

Mei Er responded coldly, "Why does he need kung fu? Does he still want to kill more people?"

Ba Ying said, "Mr. Mei Er you don't understand. It's just that Fourth Master Long only has this one child, plus he's incredible material for learning kung fu. The couple both had high hopes for him. Thinking he would make bring honor to the family. If they find out that the child can no longer practice kung fu, they'd be heartbroken."

Mei Er laughed coldly. "One can only blame it on their horrible upbringing. Letting their son be so evil. It's no one else's fault!"

Li Xun Huan did not catch a single word of their conversation.

For some reason, at this moment, he suddenly fell deeply into the past. Many memories that should not be re-awakened all suddenly came back.

He remembered that was the seventh day of the beginning of the year. He had some important business to do, so he was forced to leave home before finish celebrating the new year.

That day was also snowing. Lin Shi Yin specifically made some dishes for complementing wine. She also accompanied his drinking and watching the snow.

Lin Shi Yin grew up in his house. Her dad is Li Xun Huan's dad's wife's brother [which seems to imply that this wife is not Li Xun Huan's mom. So there's no blood relationship.] Even before they died, they talked about their marriage.

Yet Li Xun Huan and Lin Shi Yin aren't like most young rich children, who tend to keep their distances. They weren't just lovers, they were also best friends.

Although it's been ten years, Li Xun Huan still remember that day as if it were yesterday.

On that day the plum flowers were so pretty. Her half drunken smile was even prettier than the plum flowers. That innocence was filled with happiness and joy.

But... tragedy soon came.

As he was out, his enemy hooked up with a powerful local mafia to kill him. Although he was able to kill nineteen enemies, he also got injured. They capture and then hung him in a basket.

At this time, Long Xiao4 Yun came.

With a silver spear he took down the basket, saving his life. Then he spend a long time healing his injuries. Then escorted Li Xun Huan home.

From then on, they became best friends.

Yet later Long Xiao4 Yun became seriously ill. Such a strong person, yet in half a month became gravely ill. Very thin.

Only after much asking did Li Xun Huan realize that he fell sick because of Lin Shi Yin. His love for her is to a point of

madness..

He didn't know that Lin Shi Yin was already Li Xun Huan's fiancée. So he asked Li Xun Huan to let his 'cousin' be his wife. He promised that he would take excellent care of her.

How could Li Xun Huan answer him?

Yet how could he look on as his savior and best friend die in front of him?

Plus he couldn't possibly ask Lin Shi Yin to marry someone else. Lin Shi Yin would never agree.

His heart full of sorrow, full of denial. He can only find saving grace with wine. After five days of drinking, he finally made a decision. That was the most painful decision of his life.

He decided that he will let Lin Shi Yin herself leave him.

So he must provide chances for Lin Shi Yin and Long Xiao4 Yun to meet.

Even as Lin Shi Yin begged him to reconsider, he would laugh it off. He then actually brought home two famous prostitutes.

After two years, Lin Shi Yin's heart finally broke. All her hopes dashed.

She finally chose the one who was so faithful to her, Long Xiao Yun.

Li Xun Huan's plan finally worked. Yet his triumph is filled with sadness, with pain. How could he possibly stay there and continue to look at the plum flowers?

Therefore he gave his whole home and property as present for the marriage. Then went away alone. He made up his mind to never see her ever again.

Yet now, he injured their only child.

Li Xun Huan swallowed this bitter memory, swallowed his tears. Got up and said, "Where's Fourth Master Long? I'll go with you to see him."

The old 'Li's Garden' plaque has now changed to 'Happy Cloud Mansion'. Yet the two set of words on the side still exist.

'One family with seven passing the examinations'

'Father son three people all becoming Tan Hua.'

Li Xun Huan looked at these words as if someone kicked him in the stomach.

Ba Ying had already carried the red kid inside. Qin Xiao Yi also pulled Mei Er with him. Yet everyone kept starring at Li Xun Huan.

They're all wondering why is this stranger staring at this place?

Chapter 8: The Past Cannot be Changed

This used to be Li Xun Huan's own garden. He grew up here. Here, he had a very happy and a very memorable childhood. However, it was also here that he carried the remains of his parents and elder brother to their graves.

Who could believe that he would be a stranger here at this moment?

Li Xun Huan smiled, a song seems to have brushed by his ear, "Seeing him building the house. Seeing him hosting guests. Seeing his house collapse."

He deeply felt the intricacies of these words. Understood life's meeting and parting, life's gloomy song.

The driver* quietly said, "Young master, let's go in."

*[I should mention that GL actually described the 'driver' as 'qiu ran da han' or badly translated as 'A dragon-horn-like muscular man' ever since the middle of chapter 1. I couldn't think of a suitable translation, one that's short and accurate. So I just kept him as the 'driver'. But I really should point out that GL had a different name. I would've done so sooner if I knew he was going to be in the book for such a long time. I really didn't remember him being this important.]

Li Xun Huan took a deep breath, laughing bitterly while saying, "Since we're here, we have to go in sooner or later,

right?”

Who would've thought that just as he arrived at the front door, a man suddenly yelled, “Who are you? How dare you enter Fourth Master Long's place?”

A person freckled man, with a sheepskin coat, carrying a birdcage, came and blocked Li Xun Huan's path.

Li Xun Huan said, “You are...”

The freckled man put his hand on his waist, yelling loudly, “I am the governor of this estate. My daughter is Lady Long's foster sister. What do you want?”

Li Xun Huan said, “Well... If that's the case, I'll just wait here.”

The freckled man laughed coldly, saying, “I won't let you wait here. Do you think Master Long's front door is a place for everyone to stand at?”

Although the driver is really pissed, he could only control his anger.

Who would figure that the freckled man would yell again, “I told you scram, are you pretending to be dead?”

While Li Xun Huan can still hold his temper, the driver could no longer do so.

Just as he's about to show the freckled man some manners, someone inside started to yell, “Xun Huan, Xun Huan, is that really you?”

A upright, properly-dressed, handsome middle-aged man came out, his face full of joy and excitement. As he saw Li Xun Huan, he embraced him tightly, saying, “I'm right. It

really is you... really is you..."

Even before he finished, tears filled his face.

Of course, how could Li Xun not possibly feel the same way, saying, "Big brother..."

When that freckled man saw this, he could only stand there looking like an idiot.

Only to hear Long Xiao4 Yun keep saying, "Brother, I've thinking of you all these years... thinking of you..."

No one knows how many times he said this, but he suddenly laughed again, saying, "Us brothers meeting again is a happy occasion. Why are we crying here like old ladies..."

He laughed while taking Li Xun Huan with him inside. Then he yelled, "Go get the mistress. Everybody out. Come see my sworn brother. Do you know who my sworn brother is? Heheh... What I say is guaranteed to shock you."

The driver looked at them, his eyes on the verge of tears. His heart is sour, not knowing if this is happiness or sadness.

Only now did the freckled man take another breath, feeling his head while saying, "Oh my God, he's actually Li... Li Tan Hua. I heard even this house was his present. Yet I wouldn't even let him inside. I... I really deserve to die."

That red kid Long Xiao3 Yun was just surrounded by several people, sitting on the big couch in the living room. He also now understand the relationship between Li Xun Huan and his dad, and became so scared he even afraid to

cry.”

Yet just as Long Xiao4 Yun took Li Xun Huan inside, two people standing on Long Xiao3 Yun’s side suddenly came over, yelling while pointing at Li Xun Huan’s nose, “Are you the one who injured young master Yun?”

Li Xun Huan responded, “Right!”

That man said, “Nice, you really do have a lot of guts!”

Two people one right one left, both came to attack Li Xun Huan at the same time.

Li Xun Huan did not move at all, but Long Xiao4 Yun suddenly shot out his palm, then jumped up with a kick, finishing off those two attackers. Then angrily yelled, “You dare to attack him? You really have a lot of guts. Do you have any idea who he is?”

Those two people never thought that their kissing up backfired.

One of them can only stutter, “We only want to help young master...”

Long Xiao4 Yun said with authority, “What do you want to do? I’ll tell you, Long Xiao4 Yun’s son is Li Xun Huan’s son. Forget about simply teaching him a lesson, even if he took that bastard’s life, it’s still not a problem.”

He then added, “From now on, no one will bring this up again. The person who brings this up again is deliberately making an enemy of me!”

Li Xun Huan’s still standing there, not knowing how he feels.

If Long Xiao4 Yun had yelled at him, or break off their friendship, then maybe he'd feel better. But Long Xiao4 Yun instead so values their relationship, making him even more guilty and distressful. "Big brother, I really didn't know..."

Long Xiao4 Yun tapped his shoulders, saying with a smile, "Brother, since when did you become so timid? This bastard's been coddled way too much by his mother. I really shouldn't have taught him kung fu."

He then added, "Come, come. Get some wine in here. Whoever can get us brothers drunk gets 500 taels of silver."

When he mentioned money, who in the room didn't become greedy? Everyone immediately came up to toast the two.

Only to hear someone say, "The Lady is here."

Li Xun Huan finally saw Lin Shi Yin again.

Although Lin Shi Yin is not a perfect woman, no one would deny that she's a beauty. Her face too pale, her body is too thin, and although her eyes are very bright, they're also very cold. Yet her stature, her gracefulness, are unparalleled.

No matter the situation, she can make her presence felt. No matter who sees her, will never forget her.

This face has appeared in Li Xun Huan's mind tens of thousands of times. Yet each time it's so far away, so very, far away.

Every time Li Xun Huan wants to embrace her, he would

wake up from this dream, sitting in his own cold sweat, looking at the dark, cold night outside, then wait painfully until morning. Yet even when the morning comes, he's still just as in pain, just as lonely.

Now, the woman of his dreams is finally in front of him. Yet reality can be so much more cruel than dreams. In reality, he doesn't even have the choice to run away, but can only use his smile to cover his true feelings. So he forced a smile, saying, "Sister-in-law. How are you?"

"Sister-in-law"

The woman in his dreams suddenly became his sister-in-law. The driver turned his head, could not bear watching anymore. Because only he knows how painful it is for Li Xun Huan to say this "Sister-in-law".

He doesn't know if he can say those words if he were in Li Xun Huan's shoes. Doesn't know if he has the courage to accept such a reality.

If he didn't turn away, he'd be in tears by now.

Yet Lin Shi Yin didn't even seem to notice this greeting.

Her sadness seems to be concentrated fully on her child.

When that kid saw his mom, he quickly ran into his mother's arms, then resumed crying out loud, "I can no longer practice kung fu, I'm crippled. I... I don't want to live any more!"

Li Shi Yin held him tightly, saying, "Who... who injured you?"

The red kid said, "HIM!"

Lin Shi Yin's eyes followed the direction he pointed at, finally resting on Li Xun Huan's face.

She stared at Li Xun Huan, as if staring at a stranger. Then little by little hatred appeared in her eyes. Speaking one word at a time, "You...It really is you who injured him?"

Li Xun Huan can only nod quickly.

No one knows what energy is holding him up. He actually did not fall.

Lin Shi Yin continued to stare at him without blinking, speaking as she bit her lips, "Very Good. Very Good. I knew a long time ago that you would not let me live in peace. You even take away my very last bit of happiness. You..."

Long Xiao4 Yun cut her off, saying, "You can't talk to him like this. This is not totally his fault. It's all because of Yun Er ['Er' is an expression for calling a small child] getting into trouble. Besides, he didn't even know he's our child at the time."

The red kid suddenly yelled again, "He knew! He knew the whole time. Originally, he couldn't hurt me. But when I heard that he's dad's friend I stopped fighting. Yet he instead took advantage and hurt me."

The driver's whole body is about to explode, yet Li Xun Huan can still just stand there, with no intention of explaining things.

He's been through the worst pains in his life. So why does he need to argue with a kid?"

But Long Xiao4 Yun said, "Bastard, how do you dare to

lie?”

The red kid just kept crying loudly saying, “I didn’t lie, mom. I really didn’t lie!”

Long Xiao4 Yun angrily move closer to pulled him over, but Lin Shi Yin blocked in front of him, saying, “What do you want?”

Long Xiao4 Yun stomped his feet, saying, “This bastard is way too wild. I should cripple him right now, so he would stop causing trouble!”

Lin Shi Ying’s pale face suddenly showed a hint of redness, saying, “Then go ahead and kill me too!”

Her sight suddenly switched over to Li Xun Huan, then said with a cold grin, “You guys are very powerful anyway. It would be easy for you to kill a child. So add another woman should be no problems.”

Long Xiao4 Yun let out a sigh, saying, “Shi Yin, since when did you become so unreasonable?”

Lin Shi Yin didn’t even take notice, already carried the child back to her room. Although her steps are light, it’s still enough to stomp Li Xun Huan’s heart to little pieces.

Long Xiao Yun sighed again, saying, “Please forgive her, Xun Huan. She used to be quite reasonable. But once a woman becomes a mother, then she would become very irrational.”

Li Xun Huan said, “I know. For her child, anything a woman does is correct.”

He forced a smile, saying, “Although I’ve never been anyone’s mom, I have been a mother’s child.”

‘When you drink to ease distress, you only become more distressful’ is not quite accurate. It’s true that small amount of wine will make one remember more of the past, more painful memories. But when a person becomes truly drunk, then he would forget everything.

Li Xun Huan obviously knows this, so he drank as if his life depends on it.

It’s not hard to get drunk. But when a person has so many problems, he would drink a lot more. So when it comes time when he absolutely needs to be drunk, he wouldn’t be able to get drunk.

It’s already very dark.

A lot of wine has been drunk, yet Li Xun Huan did not show a slight hint of being drunk.

He also suddenly found that no one else is drunk either. Almost twenty people getting together and drink for so long, yet with no one drunk, is definitely not common.

It’s getting deeper and deeper into the night. Yet everyone’s faces are heavy, as if expecting someone to come.

Suddenly the heard the bell, it’s midnight.

Everyone’s expressions all changed immediately. One said, “It’s midnight. How come the Venerable Zhao is still not here?”

Li Xun Huan raised his eyebrows saying, “Who’s this Zhao guy? Is everyone waiting for him to come before drinking?”

One person smiled and said, "I don't want to hide this from Li Tan Hua, but if the venerable Zhao's not here, we really don't have the heart to drink."

Another person said, "Venerable Zhao is considered 'Totally Objective Iron Face' Zhao Zheng Yi. He's also Fourth Master Long's sworn big brother. You mean you don't know?"

Li Xun Huan still had a huge smile, saying, "In ten years since we last met, it looks like big brother you made this many new great friends. I drink to you."

Long Xiao4 Yun's face seems to be red, but forced a smile saying, "My brother is your brother. Come, I also drink to you."

Li Xun Huan said, "This isn't bad, I can't believe I suddenly got a few more big brothers. But I don't know if these heroes would want me as their brother."

Long Xiao4 Yun laughed loudly, saying, "They would be happy beyond belief. Why would they possibly be unhappy?"

"But..."

It's not clear what he intended to say, but he suddenly changed his words, instead said, "Venerable Zhao has always been 'Totally Objective Iron Face', I heard it's hard to ever see him smile. If I see him, I'd probably lose all desire to drink. Never thought everyone here would wait for him before drinking."

Long Xiao4 Yun thought for a while, then suddenly smiled, saying, "The Plum Flower Bandit has reappeared..."

Li Xun Huan took this opportunity to cut in, "I already heard."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "But do you know where he is?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I heard this person never stays in the same place."

Long Xiao Yun also cut him off, saying, "Correct. He does indeed can be anywhere. But I promise you that right now, he must be in this town. He might even be near my house."

When he said this, everyone else's necks shrank. That big fire in the middle of the room, seemingly can no longer hold off the freezing wind outside.

Li Xun Huan said, "So does this mean that he already made an appearance?"

Long Xiao4 Yun said one word at a time. "Correct. Third Brother Qin's eldest child almost died in his hands two days ago."

Li Xun Huan asked, "Who else did he hurt?"

Long Xiao4 Yun replied, "That I don't know. This person usually only hurts one person at a time. Plus he only appears after midnight!"

Mian Qiang chuckled, saying, "The way he kills seems like some people's drinking habits, not only does he set the time to do it, but also the amount."

Li Xun Huan also chuckled, but he doesn't look any more relaxed. He asked, "What about last night?"

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "Last night was peaceful."

Li Xun Huan said, "In that case I guess his target is young

master Qin. He won't appear again."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "He'll show up sooner or later."

"Why? Does he have some problems with you, big brother?"

Long Xiao4 Yun shook his head, saying, "His target is neither Qin Zhong nor myself."

"Who then?"

Long Xiao4 Yun barely was able to say, "His target is Lin..."

When he said the word 'Lin', Li Xun Huan's whole face changed. But thankfully he did not say 'Lin Shi Yin', but rather 'Lin Xian Er' ['Xian' means a god or a goddess. So her name is 'little goddess').

Li Xun Huan let out a sigh of relief in his heart, saying, "Lin Xian Er? Who is she?"

Long Xiao4 Yun laughed loudly, saying, "Brother, if you don't know who Lin Xian Er is, then you really must be old. If it were ten or fifteen years ago, you'd probably be more familiar with this name than anyone else."

Li Xun Huan also laughed, "It looks like she must be a beauty."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "Not only is she a beauty, she's also the considered the most beautiful woman in the martial world. The number of young heroes to have fallen for her are endless."

He then looked at the other people there, laughingly said, "Do you really think they came here for me? If it weren't for Lin Xian Er, even if I put the best food and the best

wine on the table, they'd still probably not show up."

Everyone's faces turned red. But two youngsters faces became very red. Long Xiao Yun looked at them, saying, "You two are pretty lucky. At least you now have a chance. If my brother here is still young, you'd have absolutely no chance."

Li Xun Huan also laughed, asking, "So big brother thinks I'm really that old? My body might be old, but my heart's still young."

Long Xiao4 Yun's eyes brightened, then suddenly laughed again. "You're right, you're right. Although she has countless people as her subordinate, but other than you, I don't think she'd care for anyone else."

Li Xun Huan said, "Unfortunately, I've been sunk in wine for the past ten years. My techniques aren't what it used to be."

Long Xiao4 Yun held his hand tightly, saying, "But you don't realize something, brother. Not only is this Ms. Lin very beautiful, she's also very ambitious. She doesn't want to marry anyone. But she told the whole world that whoever kills the Plum Flower Bandit, even a freckled old man, she'd still be his wife."

Li Xun Huan said, "So it's probably due to this that the Plum Flower Bandit must be so intent on killing her."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "Correct. Plum Flower Bandit went to the Cold Fragrance quarter two nights ago just to find her. But he didn't realize that Qin Zhong was there instead, so he injured him."

Li Xun Huan eyes brightened, "So young master Qin's also one of her subordinates?"

Long Xiao4 Yun chuckled, then said, “He originally had a chance, but now...”

Li Xun Huan smiled, “Cold Fragrance House’s been empty for quite a while now. But now that this lady lives there, it must be much warmer now. There’s even a lovesick youngster outside at midnight.”

Long Xiao Yun’s face became red, saying, “Cold Fragrance House used to be where you live. I really shouldn’t have let someone else live there. But... but...”

Li Xun Huan cut in, “That place can now receive the aura of a beauty, it’s really its luck. If the wood knows who’s there, they’d probably be filled with joy. They’d never let me carelessly spit[I think those living in the US doesn’t know about this habit, but its common in China to spit saliva everywhere] in there ever again.”

“But just what relationship does this woman have with big brother?”

Long Xiao4 Yun coughed twice, said, “She and Shi Yin met when they went to the temple to pray. They liked each other immediately, and became sisters. Like you and me.”

Li Xun Huan said, “So her dad is that governor I saw at the front door?”

Long Xiao4 Yun laughed, saying, “You can’t believe it, right? Actually, no one would believe how that dad can have such a daughter. This is called ‘Inside a crow’s nest born a Pheonix’.

Li Xun Huan said, “So that Venerable Zhao’s gathering people to protect her? You mean now the venerable Zhao has suddenly become a romantic?”

Long Xiao Yun didn't seem to notice Li Xun Huan's message, so he just said, "Other than protecting her, he also wants to capture the Plum Flower Bandit. Besides, so many people have already put together all that reward money. That money's in my house. If anything were to ever happen to it..."

When Li Xun Huan heard this, he suddenly asked, "Why would big brother you take this responsibility?"

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "Well, someone has to do it, right?"

Li Xun Huan thought for a moment, then said, "It's already past midnight. Is it possible that the bandit will no be here tonight?"

He suddenly got up, saying, "Since the venerable Zhao's still not here, and everyone else would not drink, I think I'll just wander around. Maybe I'll go visit my old friends the plum trees.

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "Brother you probably not only want to visit the plum trees, but also see the Plum Flower Bandit."

Li Xun Huan just smiled. But Long Xiao4 Yun said, "Why are you going into danger alone?"

Li Xun Huan still just kept smiling.

Long Xiao4 Yun still just looked at him, then said with a smile, "Fine. Fine. I know that when you make up your mind, no one can stop you. Besides , when the Plum Flower Bandit find you here, He would not dare to show up."

The plum trees in the garden are still there. But what happened to the person in the garden?

Li Xun Huan just sat there quietly, starring at the candlelight in the building faraway. Ten years ago, this little building was his. The person in the building was also his.

Now, everything has passed. No longer can be brought back. Only dreams, loneliness remains.

Dreams might be painful, but without dreams, he probably could not keep on living.

After crossing the bridge is the plum forest. There's also a house here among the trees. This used to be the place Li Xun Huan practiced martial arts and read books. If he simply opened the windows of this house, he would see the other house, would see that person smiling beautifully back at him.

But now...

When love becomes deep it turns shallow. Li Xun Huan sighed, brushing off the snow on his shoulders, then crossed the bridge. There's no one here. He can't hear anyone either. After midnight is the time for the Plum Flower Bandit's appearance. No one would dare come here at this time.

He doesn't really want to see Lin Xian Er. He also knows that Lin Xian Er can't possibly stay here long. He just want to see the house.

It's at this time that he heard light laughter.

Li Xun Huan's whole body changed. That lazy body now filled with energy, charging towards the place of the

voice.

The laugh seems to be that of a woman. And it's a very quiet one.

He then saw a white shadow trying to run away from behind him. Then a black shadow came to attack him.

This person is quite big and very fast. Although he's still more than 10 feet away, Li Xun Huan already felt a strong, cold wind coming from him.

Li Xun Huan recognizes that the person's kung fu is very strange but very powerful.

The Plum Flower Bandit!

Could the person be it?

Li Xun Huan did not block this move. If he doesn't need to, he would never have an all-out fight with anyone. Because he feels that his energy is more important than others'.

Once, Golden Fist Deng Lie kept asking him to match inner power, but Li Xun Huan kept rejecting him. Deng Lie asked why.

Li Xun Huan only responded, "I'm not a cow. So why should I fight like one?"

He thinks that kung fu is also an art. Movement should come freely. If one forcefully duel with someone else, then they must be as stupid as cows.

But since Deng Lie is his friend, he can turn down the request. But this person wants him to die, so he must block off all of Li Xun Huan's escape routes first.

Besides, the two are running towards each other. Even if Li Xun Huan manages to evade the attack, the enemy immediately gains initiative. So when the enemy makes his second move, Li Xun Huan really would have no chance to escape.

Li Xun Huan suddenly moved back.

The speed at which he changed directions is amazing, even better than fishes.

But the man in black is still coming at him with the palm.

After falling back with lightning speed, his body came to a state of rest. His hand doesn't seem to be moving, but the Flying Dagger is already shot out!

The dagger glowed brightly, like a shooting star in a dark night!

The man in black suddenly screamed in pain. Jumped up, turned around, and then ran back into the forest.

Li Xun Huan just stood there. He acted like a bored person, but didn't give chase.

Before the man in black can leave the forest, he fell.

Li Xun Huan shook his head and sighed. He followed the blood trail, with the man in black at the end of the trail.

His hands holding his own throat, blood gushing out. That bright little dagger, has been pulled out, resting by his side.

Li Xun Huan picked up his dagger, then looked at the painful expression on that person's face, asking, "If you're

not the Plum Flower Bandit, why did you attack me?”

That person kept biting his teeth, but couldn't speak.

Li Xun Huan said, “Although you don't know me, I recognize you. You're the eldest student of Yi Ku. I saw you ten years ago. If I see someone, I would never forget him.”

That person struggled mightily to say, “I... I also recognized you.”

“If you recognized me, why do you still want to kill me? You want to prevent me from leaking out information? But even if you're meeting someone here, it can't possibly be that secretive, right?”

That person wants to talk, but can't do so.

Li Xun Huan shook his head, saying, “I know you must've been doing something you don't want others to know. That's why you want to kill me. At that time, you probably did not figure it was me.”

He sighed again before continuing, “Since you wanted to kill me, I had to kill you. You chose the wrong person. So did I...”

That person suddenly screamed, then ran towards Li Xun Huan.

But Li Xun Huan still just stood there. As that person's palms almost reached Li Xun Huan's chest, he fell down, never to get up again.

Li Xun Huan still just stared at him. After a long time, he finally looked up and said, “Two nights ago it was Qin Xiao Yi's son. Today it's Yi Ku's student. Looks like this Lin Xian Er really has a lot of spare time, and has good tastes. All

her acquaintances are famous youngsters. But which young girl doesn't dream of meeting her knight? What's wrong with a lovesick young man? These certainly aren't crimes. Why do they have to hide it? What other secrets do they have?

The Cold Fragrance House's light is still on. He seems to be the person that escaped. The body very slim. Could it be Lin Xian Er?

As he's thinking, Li Xun Huan walked over.

His eyes suddenly glowed, as if he just thought of something really interesting.

As the wind zips through the forest, more snow fell on the ground.

Suddenly, each snow seems to be moved apart by a strange aura. Someone is attacking Li Xun Huan from behind.

Li Xun Huan tightened his body, fully aware of the sword energy aimed at him.

At this time, the sword has already sliced apart his coat.

In this quiet cold evening, in this quiet plum forest, there's actually someone who really wants his life! He has wandered for ten years, just returned home.

Could this be the welcome prepared for him?

If Li Xun Huan had dodged left, his right arm would've been cut off. If he dodged right, his left arm would've been cut off. If he had moved forward, his back would've been penetrated. No matter which direction he goes, he can't possibly be faster than this sword!

He's been through hundreds of battles, yet he's never seen a sword this fast!

The tip of the sword has penetrated Li Xun Huan's coat.

But just at this moment, Li Xun Huan's body moved, he skimmed the edge of the sword as the icy cold tip passes by him.

In all his countless battles, he has never been so close to death.

The enemy seems even more shocked that his attack failed. But suddenly the sword tip turned, slicing down at Li Xun Huan, but by this time, the dagger in Li Xun Huan's hand suddenly sliced his wrist.

This dagger is so fast no enemy can describe its movement.

That person, shocked beyond belief, yelled loudly. He dropped his sword while retreating.

Is there anyone's kung fu that's faster than Little Li's Flying Dagger?

Suddenly, someone yelled loudly, "Brothers. Stop!"

This is the voice of Long Xiao4 Yun.

Li Xun Huan gathered himself. Long Xiao4 Yun has entered the forest. That person also revealed himself. He's a youngster with a white face in white clothing.

Long Xiao4Yun put himself in the middle of the two. Then asked, "How did you two managed to get in a fight?"

That youngster's eyes in the night looked like an owl. He stared at Li Xun Huan, saying coldly, "There's a dead person outside the forest. So I thought the person in the forest must be the Plum Flower Bandit."

Li Xun Huan smiled, "How come you didn't think the dead person is the bandit?"

The youngster laughed coldly, saying, "How could the Plum Flower Bandit die so easily?"

Li Xun Huan said, "You mean the Plum Flower Bandit can only die in your hands? Unfortunately..."

Long Xiao Yun cut in while laughing, "How about both of you stop. This is just a misunderstanding. It's a good thing we came, or someone might get hurt."

Li Xun Huan smiled a bit, then picked up the sword still stuck on his coat. He looked at the sword and said, "Great sword!"

He then gave the sword back to the youngster, saying, "The sword is famous. Then the person must also be famous. Today we had a misunderstanding, but it's still nice to have met you. It's not everyday that we get to see such a famous sword."

Red appeared on the youngster's white face. After taking the sword, he just flicked it, breaking the sword in two.

Li Xun Huan sighed, saying, "Such a great sword. Too bad."

The youngster stared at Li Xun Huan saying, "Even without this sword, I can still kill. You don't have to worry about me."

Li Xun Huan laughingly said, "If I knew earlier, I would've asked you to give me your sword, so I can exchange it for another coat to wear.

The youngster coldly laughed, saying, "You don't have to worry about this either. Forget one coat, even if its ten coat, I'll still pay for the damages."

Li Xun Huan said, "However, there's not another coat like mine."

"Why's that? Is there something particular colorful with this coat?"

Li Xun Huan said with a serious face, "Nothing colorful. It's just that my coat has an eye."

Chapter 9: Another Encounter

The youngster heard Li Xun Huan's words, gathered himself, then grinned, saying, "Interesting. Your words really are interesting. How can a coat have eyes?"

Li Xun Huan said with a smile, "If my coat didn't have eyes, then how can it see your precious sword? How can I then dodge the sword attack from the back?"

The youngster's face suddenly changed, his hands shaking.

Long Xiao4 Yun coughed twice, then laughed, "The two of you really know how to joke. Hidden Sword Mansion's young master would certainly never care for such a sword, yet why do you care so much for your coat?"

Li Xun Huan said, "So this is young master You."

Long Xiao4 Yun said with a smile, "Right. Not only is he the son of Hidden Dragon elder's son, he's also the Number One Sword Snow Eagle elder's only disciple. In the future you two should be more acquainted."

You Long Sheng's eyes still kept staring at Li Xun Huan, saying coldly, "I don't know if that's possible. But this friend of yours, his name is..."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "So brother You doesn't know this brother of mine. His last name is Li, called Li Xun Huan. In this world, I'm afraid only this brother of mine is worthy to be your friend."

When he heard the name, You Long Sheng's expression changed yet again, staring closely at Li Xun Huan's dagger.

Yet Li Xun Huan didn't even seem to notice their conversation. Instead he just kept thinking, "Another famous youngster..." Suddenly, someone came in, asking, "Who killed the person outside?"

This person's quite muscular. His voice booming. His expression extremely serious. This person just happens to be the venerable Zhao Zheng Yi.

Li Xun Huan smiled, then said, "Other than I, who else could've done it?"

Zhao Zheng Yi's eyes stared at Li Xun Huan like a sharp knife. Said loudly, "You? I should've known it was you. No matter where you go, you bring the odor of death."

Li Xun Huan said, "So that person doesn't deserve to die?"

Zhao Zheng Yi asked him, "Do you know who he is?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Unfortunately not the Plum Flower Bandit."

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "If you knew he wasn't the Plum Flower Bandit, then why did you still kill him?"

Li Xun Huan said in a calm voice, "Although I don't want to

kill him, I also don't want him to kill me. No matter what, it's still nicer to kill than to be killed."

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "So he wanted to kill you first?"

"Yes"

Zhao Zheng Yi asked, "Why?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I wanted to know too. But when I asked, he ignored me."

Zhao Zheng Yi asked, "Why didn't you keep him alive?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I wanted to keep him alive. But alas once the dagger leaves my hand, I can no longer control my opponent's life and death."

Zhao Zheng Yi stomped his feet, saying, "If you went outside already, why did you come back?"

Li Xun Huan smiled, saying, "Because I really wanted to see you, venerable Zhao."

Zhao Zheng Yi's is now so angry his face became yellow. Pointing at Long Xiao Yun saying, "Very Good. This problem is caused by you great brother. No one else is responsible."

Long Xiao Yun can only smile, saying, "Why the temper, big brother. Let's just talk it out."

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "What's there to say? It's already hard enough to deal with the Plum Flower Bandit. Now we have to deal with the Green Devil Yi Ku too."

Li Xun Huan laughed coldly, saying, "That's right, I did kill Yi

Ku's student Qiu Du. If he finds out he'll certainly come to seek revenge. But he's only going to look for me. Why would the venerable Zhao be so worried?"

Long Xiao4 Yun suddenly said, "Since Qiu Du came here after midnight, he obviously has some evil intentions. Brother, you didn't wrongfully killed him. If it were me, I'd probably do the same thing."

Before he can finish, Zhao Zheng Yi turned around to leave.

You Long Sheng suddenly smiled, saying, "The venerable Zhao really is old. Your temper keeps getting bigger and bigger, but your courage keeps getting smaller and smaller. Really, what's wrong with Yi Ku coming? This way, at least I can see the world famous flying dagger in action."

Li Xun Huan said, "Actually, if you want to see my dagger, you don't have to wait til Yi Ku comes here."

You Long Sheng's face changed again, as if he wanted to say something. But when he saw Li Xun Huan's dagger, he stopped. Then he also turned around and left too.

Long Xiao4 Yun wanted to go after him, but stopped. Shaking his head saying, "Even if you don't like them and look down upon them, you should still not have angered them."

Li Xun Huan said, "Who cares. They already think I'm beyond help. It doesn't matter if I piss them off. In fact, it's actually better to get them angry enough to leave, so I can be in peace."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "But it's better to have more friends than less."

Li Xun Huan said, "But how many people really can live up to the word 'friend'? Having a friend like big brother, one's enough for any person."

Long Xiao4 Yun laughed heartily, holding Li Xun Huan's shoulders saying, "Brother, just to hear you say that, even if I anger every other friend, it's still fine."

Li Xun Huan suddenly felt a surge of warmth, but then started coughing again.

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "Your cough..."

It's as if Li Xun Huan doesn't want him to bring up this topic, so he immediately cut him off by saying, "Big brother. I just want to see a person right now."

"Who?"

He raised his eyebrows, didn't wait for Li Xun Huan to respond, then added, "Is it Lin Xian Er?"

Li Xun Huan smiled, saying, "Big brother really knows me well."

Long Xiao4 Yun laughed out loud too. "I knew you just can't wait to see her. If Li Xun Huan won't even see the most beautiful woman in the world, then Li Xun Huan is not Li Xun Huan."

Li Xun Huan just kept smiling, as if confirming this.

But what does he really think? Other than himself, probably no one else knows this.

Long Xiao4 Yun already grabbed his hand heading out, saying with a smile, "If you really came here looking for her, then you've come to the wrong place. After the events two nights ago, she had moved out of that room."

"Oh?"

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "The past two nights she stayed with Shi Yin. You can also take this opportunity to see Shi Yin too. She is a woman after all. You should try to go calm her a bit."

He didn't seem to notice the painful look on Li Xun Huan's face, sighed and continued, "Actually, it's not like she doesn't know that what Yun Er does outside is horrible. She's not really blaming you."

Li Xun Huan forced a smile, saying, "But since we're here, we might as go to the Cold Fragrance House. Maybe Ms. Lin came back."

Long Xiao4Yun said with a smile, "That's fine too. Looks like if you don't see her tonight, you won't even be able to sleep."

Li Xun Huan still kept smiling, not saying anything.

But there's something in his eyes, something that shows that he has a secret.

There really isn't anyone in the room.

As Li Xun Huan entered, he suddenly entered the memories of ten years ago.

This room had not changed all these years. Each table and chair, even the paper, brushes, ink, all remained in their

original place.

If this were ten years ago, then maybe he had just accompanied Lin Shi Yin as she counted the plum flowers, maybe he came in to get a fur coat for her to wear, or maybe to write down some of their conversations, so he would never forget them.

But now that he think about it, he never could forget those memories. If he had known this earlier, he would've never bothered to write them down.

Snow is falling again.

Snowflakes fell lightly on the rooftops, gentle as a lover's words.

Lin Xun Hun took deep breath, saying, "Ten years... Maybe even more than that. Sometimes you think time goes by too slowly. But once they've passed, then you begin to realize how quickly they pass."

Long Xiao4 Yun laughed and said, "Do you remember the first day we came? It also seemed to be snowing on that day."

Li Xun Huan said, "How... how can I forget."

Long Xiao4 Yun laughed, "I remember that we must've drunk all the wine stored in your house that day. It's also the only time I've ever seen you drunk, but won't admit it. You even made a bet with me, saying you can write out "The Eight Qiu Xing" [probably a book of poems or something] without any mistake."

He suddenly took out a brush from the table, saying, "I

remember it was this brush you used.”

Li Xun Huan’s smile seem so artificial, yet he continue to smile. “I also remember that I won the bet.”

Long Xiao4 Yun responded, “But you didn’t know that ten years later, your brush would still be here, right?”

Li Xun Huan just smiled without talking, but a thought suddenly came to him. “The brush is still here, but isn’t someone else living here now?”

Long Xiao4 Yun said, “You know, it’s quite strange. It’s almost as if Lin Xian Er knew you were coming back. Although she’s lived here for several years now, she never moved anything.”

Li Xun Huan said, “Actually, she didn’t have to.”

Long Xiao4 Yun said with a smile, “We also didn’t force her to do this, but she...”

Suddenly someone from outside yelled, “Fourth Master. Fourth Master Long!”

Long Xiao4 Yun opened the window, said with an irrate face, “I’m here. What’s the problem?”

His expression suddenly changed, then turned back and said, “Brother you...”

Li Xun Huan said, “I... I still want to remain here a bit longer. Is that a problem?”

Long Xiao Yun said with a smile, “Of course. These were yours anyway. Even if Lin Xian Er came back, she would only

welcome you.”

He then quickly left. As he left the door, his smile disappeared.

Li Xun Huan sat on a wide chair with tiger skin covering it. This chair is even bigger than he remembered in his youth.

He remembered that when he was very little, he loved to climb to onto this chair and wet the ink for his dad. He just wished to be taller, so he can sit on this chair. At that time he had a strange thought. He was really afraid that chairs would be like people, get bigger as time passed.

Finally came the day when he could sit on the chair. He also figured out that the chair cannot grow bigger. Then he would privately feel bad for this chair.

But now, he only hope to be like this chair, never grow older, never have pain, but unfortunately, this chair remains the same, but he’s already an old man.

Old man... old man...

Suddenly he heard someone laughing gently while saying, “Who said you’re an old man?”

The person is still outside, but the laughter filled the room with warmth. Although her body had not came in yet, her voice carried Spring along with it. If her laughter is like this, one can imagine what her person’s like.

Li Xun Huan’s eyes suddenly lit up again, but he only stared at the door, not getting up, not saying a word.

Lin Xian Er finally came into the room.

The other people really weren't kidding. She really is as beautiful as a goddess. If someone actually tried to describe her beauty, that person is doing her a huge injustice.

There's not single part of her that isn't arousing. But the most arousing part of her body are her eyes. No man on this Earth can possibly resist those eyes.

Looking at her eyes makes people feel like they've commit a crime.

Yet she also looks like the most gentle, the most heart-warming girl there ever is.

But no matter what she looks like, though, she can no longer erase Li Xun Huan's image of her, because this isn't the first time Li Xun Huan has seen her.

In the kitchen of that bar, Li Xun Huan has already felt her gentleness, her warmth. But Li Xun Huan still could not believe that the woman in front of him is the same mysterious beauty who wanted to exchange the Golden Thread Vest with him.

Because her look now is totally different from that day. If Li Xun Huan didn't trust his eyes totally, then he would not believe that venomous, ****ty woman is the same one that's smiling innocently and sweetly in front of him.

Li Xun Huan let out a sigh, then closed his eyes.

Tears began to roll in Lin Xian Er's eyes. She said gently, "Why did you close your eyes? You don't want to see me?"

Li Xun Huan chuckled, saying, "I just wanted to remember

how you looked that day with your clothes off.”

Lin Xian Er’s face suddenly became red, then said, “I originally didn’t want you to recognize me, but I also know that it’s quite impossible.”

Li Xun Huan said, “If I really did forget you in such a short time, then wouldn’t you be disappointed?”

Li Xian Er still kept smiling, “But when you saw me you didn’t look shocked. Does this mean you knew who I was already?”

Li Xun Huan said, “This might be because not many woman can be considered a beauty in this world.”

Lin Xian Er said with a smile, “But it might also be because you saw Yi Ku’s disciple, remembered my Green Devil Hand, then saw You Long Sheng, remembered my Hidden Fish Sword, right?”

Li Xun Huan also smiled, saying, “I’m only curious to know, since you know I’m here, why do you still have the guts to come see me?”

Lin Xian Er sighed, then said, “An ugly daughter-in-law has to see her mother-in-law sooner or later. It’s unavoidable. So when Brother Long asked me to come, I immediately came.”

“Really? He told you to come here?”

Lin Xian Er laughed again, saying, “You mean you don’t understand his reasons? He has wanted us to get together for quite a while now. Maybe it’s because he has always felt that he owe you something. Robbed your...”

When she said this, she saw that Li Xun Huan's face immediately became more sullen, because he knows what she was going to say. But when his expression changed, she also immediately stopped.

She never says things others don't want to hear.

Yet Li Xun Huan seems to be waiting for her to finish. Only after a while did he say, "He doesn't owe me anything. No one has ever owed me anything. Only I owe other people."

Lin Xian Er stared at him, asking, "Who do you owe?"

Li Xun Huan replied coldly, "I owe way too many people. Too many to count."

Lin Xian Er said gently, "No matter what you say, I still know that you're not that kind of person."

"You know what kind of person I am?"

"Of course I know. I've heard your stories ever since I was little. So when I found out this is where you used to live, I was so happy I couldn't sleep."

She turned around, saying, "Look. Everything in this room. Does it not look exactly as you left it ten years ago? Even that bottle of wine you hid on the bookshelf, I did not move. Do you know why?"

Li Xun Huan only stared at her coldly.

Lin Xian Er chuckled. "Of course you don't know. But I can tell you, because only this way can I feel like this is your room. Sometimes I would imagine you still in this room,

sitting in this chair, talking with me quietly.”

She then continued in a softer voice, “Sometimes I would wake up in the middle of the night, thinking you’re by my side. On that bed, on that pillow.”

Li Xun Huan suddenly smiled, saying, “Other than me, there are probably other people there too, right?”

Lin Xian Er bit her lips, asking, “You really think I let other people in here?”

Li Xun Huan said, “This is your room. You can let anyone you want in here.”

Lin Xian Er said, “You really think those like You Long Sheng and Qiu Du had been here, right?”

Her eyes are already red, continuing, “I’ll tell you. They have never ever walked into this room. That’s why they had to wait in the forest. If I let them come in, then maybe Qiu Du and Qin Zhong would not have died.”

“If that’s the case, then why don’t you let them come in?”

Lin Xian Er again bit her lips as she said, “Because this is your room. I must... help you preserve the...”

She doesn’t seem to know how to continue.

Li Xun Huan smiled, finishing the sentence for her, “scent?”

Lin Xian Er’s whole face became red, saying, “Do you understand me yet?”

Li Xun Huan said with a smile, “But it’s only now that I know

I actually had a particular scent. So what is it? Sweet? Horrible?”

Lin Xian Er lowered her head, saying, “I didn’t say these things to you so you can ridicule me.”

“Then why?”

“You mean you still don’t know?”

Li Xun Huan laughed, saying, “If that’s the case, even without someone helping, I already have a really good chance with you.”

Lin Xian Er said, “If I didn’t already... already feel... then that day why would I...”

She only said half of each sentence, but sometimes saying half a sentence is much more effective than saying the whole sentence. Plus it’s much more interesting.

Li Xun Huan said, “So you did that because you liked me. And I thought you did it for the vest.”

Lin Xian Er said, “Of course I also wanted the vest. But if the person wasn’t you, then why would I...would I...”

Li Xun Huan laughed, saying, “So you wanted both.”

Lin Xian Er said, “You must be wondering, why would I want the Golden Thread Vest, right?”

Li Xun Huan said, “Frankly, I really am curious.”

Lin Xian Er said, “That’s because I want to kill the Plum Flower Bandit myself!”

“Huh?”

“You must know. I said that I would marry the one who kills the Plum Flower Bandit. Although I said it, I still didn’t like it.”

Li Xun Huan said, “You want to kill the Plum Flower Bandit so you can marry yourself?”

Lin Xian Er said, “I only do this because I really don’t want to marry. So if I killed the bandit myself, I won’t have to marry.”

She suddenly looked up at Li Xun Huan, saying, “Because no man on this Earth is worth me marrying.”

Li Xun Huan’s eyes also looked at her, asking, “What about me?”

Lin Xian Er’s face became really red, saying, “You’re obviously different.”

“Why?”

Lin Xian Er said quietly, “Because you’re different from other men. Those man are like dogs. No matter how I treat them, they would still follow me. Only you...”

Li Xun Huan smiled a bit, saying, “Then why don’t you just leave the Golden Thread Vest with me? If I kill the Plum Flower Bandit, then you can marry me. Isn’t that what you wanted?”

Lin Xian Er hesitated a bit, then smiled again, saying, “This is actually a good idea. Why didn’t I think of it?”

Li Xun Huan's eyes flickered, grinning while saying, "Who else other than myself can come up with an idea as ingenious as this one."

Lin Xian Er seemingly did not understand the meaning of Li Xun Huan's words, instead held his hand, saying, "I know the Plum Flower Bandit will appear the next night or two. Tomorrow I'll wait for him here."

Li Xun Huan said, "You want me to come too, right?"

Lin Xian Er said, "you can use me as bait, getting him to appear. You have the vest anyway, so even if you can't kill him, you're at least safe. If you were to capture him..." She suddenly lowered her head again, those eyes staring quietly at Li Xun Huan. Although she spoke no words, those eyes explained her feelings perfectly.

Li Xun Huan's eyes also brightened, said with a smile, "Sure. I'll certainly come tomorrow night. If I don't come, then..."

Lin Xian Er pulled her hands off of Li Xun Huan, but she then drew a circle on his hand's back, as if to circle around Li Xun Huan's heart.

Li Xun Huan suddenly laughed again, saying, "Looks like you've learned to behave now."

Lin Xian Er said with a red face, "I've always behaved."

Li Xun Huan said, "You finally learned for the man to make the first move."

But Lin Xian Er suddenly became nervous, saying, "But you... you won't now... right?"

Li Xun Huan looked at her. His eyes still that cold, but his mouth already showed a not-so-cold smile, saying, "How do you know I won't?"

Lin Xian Er chuckled, saying, "Because you're a true gentleman, right?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I've only been a true gentleman once in my life. Then I regretted my decision for three whole days.

As Lin Xian Er's laughing, she seems to show a wish to escape.

But Li Xun Huan then immediately pulled on her arms, then said with a smile, "So not only have you learned for the man to make the first move, you also learned to escape."

Lin Xian Er responded, "But this is how you taught me. This is how you taught me to seduce you, right?"

Chapter 10: Problem of 18 years Ago

Li Xun Huan took a deep breath, then said, "I taught you way too much. You are also learning way too fast."

He suddenly released his hands, got up and straightened his clothes, then said while staring at the window, "Today's show is over. If you still haven't seen enough, then please come back tomorrow morning."

A laugh suddenly came from outside the window. A person said, "Your techniques really are quite excellent. Hopefully, your dagger is just as good."

After he finished the last sentence, he's already gone.

Lin Xian Er's expression changed, "It's You Long Sheng."

Li Xun Huan said, "You're afraid that he might be jealous?"

Lin Xian Er's eyes showed a venomous expression, laughing coldly, she said. "What right does he have to be jealous? I can't believe a supposed righteous character in the martial world would also do something like this. Don't think I'll ever talk to him again."

Li Xun Huan said with a smile, "You're not afraid that he'll take the Hidden Fish Sword back?"

Lin Xian Er said, "Even if I throw the sword in front of his face, he still would not dare touch it."

"Really!"

Lin Xian Er smiled deviously, "I told you already. These people are like dogs. The more you yell and kick them, the more closely they follow you, wagging their tail."

Li Xun Huan said, "It's not bad having a dog wagging its tail in front of you."

Lin Xian Er grabbed his hand, said, "You really are leaving? Why not sit a bit longer?"

Li Xun Huan said with a smile, "If I sit any longer, waiting for a dog to bite me, then things will no longer be interesting."

Lin Xian Er said viciously, "Humph. He wouldn't dare..."

Before she could finish, they heard You Long Seng say from a far off distance, "That show's over, but another show is just starting. Do you wish to watch?"

Li Xun Huan said, "See. I told you he wouldn't let me sit any longer."

Lin Xian Er again said viciously, "Annoying little bastard."

She suddenly smiled again, holding Li Xun Huan's hand saying, "But there's still tomorrow.. Please come earlier tomorrow."

Just as Li Xun Huan left the forest, he heard two people

yelling at each other.

He already realizes that one of them is the driver. He then used 'Sparrow Three Touches of Water', touched the ground three times, before reaching the scene.

At this time two people are fighting. With such powerful palm and fist attacks, snow started to fly around them.

Only to hear the driver said, "Qin, you make yourself look all virtuous, but in reality you're worthless. So what if your son is beyond help. It's no one else's fault. Why do you have to try to kill him?"

The person fighting him is Qin Xiao Yi. At this time he just snickered, "Who the hell do you think you are? Look at your own place for a moment. How do you dare interfere with my business. Fine, I'll cripple you too."

Long Xiao4 Yun tried to break them up, but You Long Sheng just stood there.

As Li Xun Huan arrived, Long Xiao4 Yun went up to him, saying, "Brother. Try to calm them down. Even before the Plum Flower Bandit arrives, we're already fighting each other. This... this really..."

You Long Sheng coldly laughed, then said, "This is called 'There are no weak soldiers under a powerful General'. I never thought Li Xun Huan's servant is this powerful. Really is vicious, vicious..."

Li Xun Huan said, "That's right. He is quite vicious. But only if someone angered him."

He didn't give You Long Sheng a chance to respond,

immediately turned to Long Xiao4 Yun asking, “What’s going on here?”

Long Xiao4 Yun said, “Because Qin Zhong’s injuries are so severe he’s beyond help, brother Qin...”

Li Xun Huan said, “So he blamed it all on Mr. Mei Er, right?”

Long Xiao4 Yun laughed bitterly, “The father-son relationship is very close, so it’s not unexpected that brother Qin became so angry. He accidentally injured Mr. Mei Er, but it’s not serious.”

Li Xun Huan chuckled a bit, not bothering to add anything.

Long Xiao Yun said, “Please stop him. I know he only listens to you.”

Li Xun Huan responded in a cold voice, “Why should I stop him? If he isn’t doing this already, then I would’ve instead.”

Long Xiao4 Yun froze for a moment, not knowing what to say.

Only to see the driver’s fist filled with power, each fist is an all-out attack, although the moves aren’t very elaborate, the killer energy behind it is quite shocking.

Qin Xiao Yi looks as if he can’t even breathe.

You Long Sheng coldly laughed. “A servant with this type of kung fu, really is rare.”

Li Xun Huan asked, “Really?”

You Long Sheng said, “Each time he makes a move, it’s as if he’s ready to get hit also. This type of fist really makes

observers hard to understand.”

Li Xun Huan said, “This is because he can easily withstand his opponent’s attacks, but if he lands a hit on the opponent, then that person would have serious problems.”

Before You Long Sheng can respond, someone else came yelling, “What a bold servant dog, even dare to attack someone above you. Watch as I take care of you.”

As he spoke, Zhao Zheng Yi arrived at the scene.

Just as he’s about to join the fight, he heard Li Xun Huan said coldly, “If someone wants to fight two against one, winning through numbers, then I’m afraid I’ll have to release my dagger!”

Zhao Zheng Yi immediately stopped, afraid to step forward. He yelled angrily, “You brought a servant who dare to attack a person above him. Not only do you not discipline him, you even protect him? You think there’s no justice in the martial world?”

Li Xun Huan said calmly, “What justice? Is it justice to fight two against one?”

Zhao Zheng Yi responded loudly, “You should know that this is not fighting, but rather disciplining a servant!”

Li Xun Huan said, “He never needed disciplining. But if the venerable Zhao wants to fight him, go ahead and get the venerable Qin back here, then fight him yourself.”

Zhao Zheng Yi said, “What kind of a thing* does he think he is? He’s not worthy of fighting me.”

*[the word 'dong xi', translated as 'item' or 'thing' is commonly used to put someone down. I kept the original wording because of the text that follows.]

Li Xun Huan said calmly, "It's true that he really isn't any 'thing'. He's a person."

He then looked at Zhao Zheng Yi with a smile."So venerable Zhao, are you a 'thing'?"

[Gu Long reuse this little joke all time in his books. It really is quite funny in Chinese. Maybe someday I can rack my brains come up with a suitable humorous translation.]

Zhao Zheng Yi became so mad his face turned all yellow.

At a time like this, even Long Xiao Yun don't know what to say either. But suddenly, with a loud noise, two fist attacked at the same time. But where's Qin Xiao Yi? It's as if he flew out after getting hit, then fell to the ground with a loud thud.

You Long Sheng again laughed coldly. "Looks like not only can a master not discipline a servant, but it's actually the other way around."

Only to see Qin Xiao Yi whisper something into Zhao Zheng Yi's ear. Zhao Zheng Yi got up and stared at the driver, saying, "I can't believe you actually have such good kung fu. Even I did not notice. No wonder when third brother lowered his guard, you were able to use some sneaky means of defeating him."

The driver laughed coldly. "If you people lose, then the other person must have used some devious method. If I were to

lose, then it's because I have lesser skills. I'm quite familiar with this idea. You don't have to repeat it."

Zhao Zheng Yi said angrily, "I originally thought you were a brave man, so I wanted to protect you. Don't anger me."

The driver responded, "I already lived til today without your protection. I guess I was just beginning to dislike my life, so if you have something up sleeve, just go ahead and use it."

Zhao Zheng Yi stared at him, fire came out of his eyes, then showed a nasty grinned. "Very Good..."

He said 'very good' five or six times. Then picked up Qin Xiao Yi and left.

Long Xiao4 Yun went up and said with a smile, "If there's a misunderstanding we can talk. Why..."

Qin Xiao Yi chuckled, "After all that has happened to my son and I, you think there's still room for talking?"

Long Xiao4 Yun stepped back, and watched Qin Xiao Yi and Zhao Zheng Yi leave.

Li Xun Huan took a deep breath, then said, "Big brother, I just came back and already caused so many problems. If... I knew..."

Long Xiao4 Yun suddenly laughed loudly, "Brother. Don't ever say these things. Since when have we worried about problems?"

Li Xun Huan forced a smile. "Brother, but... I know I've made things hard for you..."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "Brother. Don't worry about me. No matter what you do, I'll always be by your side."

Li Xun Huan almost cannot keep tears of joy from coming out eyes.

Long Xiao4 Yun looked at that driver, as if wanting to say something. But he suddenly changed his words, "It's almost dawn. Looks like the Plum Flower Bandit will not show up today. You've traveled quite a bit. Why don't you rest here?"

"Ok."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "I already furnished a room for you. But if you still want to live in your old place, then I can ask Lin Xian Er to move out."

Li Xun Huan said, "That's not necessary."

The driver just sat there, deep in thought. After a long time, he bit his teeth, as if he's about to make a painful decision. Then he said, "Young master, it looks like I have to go now."

"You're leaving? You're also leaving?"

The driver said, "You're my savior, so I originally planned to serve you all my life, but now..."

They suddenly heard sound of horses in this middle of the night.

He continued, "Zhao Zheng Yi already knows my identity. He's probably contacting my enemies right now. I never cared much for my life, so I don't worry about them. But..."

“But you don’t want to get me involved, right?”

The driver said, “I know young master you’re not afraid of trouble. But the defendant in the case of eighteen years ago was me. I don’t want young master you also being yelled at with me.”

Li Xun Huan thought for a second, then said, “That was an accident. In the past eighteen years, you’ve more than made up for your mistakes.”

The driver said, “But they won’t care. Blood debts in the martial world can only be repaid by blood!” He didn’t wait for Li Xun Huan to cut in before continuing, “Besides, I want to see Mr. Mei Er. After his injuries, I’m not sure how far he went. No matter what, he only came because of us.”

Li Xun Huan just sat there for a long time, then asked, “So where do you plan to go?”

The driver sighed, responds, “Right now even I don’t know that answer. But...”

He suddenly smiled, “I won’t go very far. When there’s a calm night with a bright moon, I might be back to drink with young master.”

Li Xun Huan suddenly stood, saying, “You sure?”

“Definitely!”

When their eyes met, tears came out. So they were forced to look away. When heroes part, they sometimes act mushier than little girls. This is because although they care so much for each other, they would never speak of them.

Li Xun Huan only said, “If you’re really leaving, at least let

me escort you out.”

The street is very quiet. Even sound of Li Xun Huan’s cough isn’t enough to break the eeriness.

The driver suddenly stopped. “We have to part sometime. Young master... you should go back.”

Li Xun Huan walked a few more step, but finally stopped. After staring mindlessly at a tree at the end of the street for a long time, he turned his head, “Fine. I’ll go back now. Take care of yourself.”

The driver nodded, then said, “Young master, please take care too.”

He no longer looked at Li Xun Huan, simply walked past him. After walking a few more feet, he then added, “If young master doesn’t have anything else to do, then you should just stay here. No matter what, master Long is a good friend.”

He added, “If that’s the case, then maybe I’ll be back looking for young master in the near future.”

Li Xun Huan said, “Maybe I will stay here. It’s not like I have anywhere else to go.”

He still smiling, but what is he smiling about?

The driver bit his teeth as he walked away.

He now must resume this life of hiding. He already hid with Li Xun Huan for ten years, no one knows what this life is like. It’s like a never-ending dream.

But for the past ten years, at least he had Li Xun Huan to accompany him.

Now he is alone.

If he were a coward, then maybe he wouldn't have escaped. Because he knows that hiding by yourself is more painful than even death.

But he must escape. He just saw that Li Xun Huan might be settling down again. He must leave. Only by leaving can Li Xun Huan live in peace.

He should have first thought out everything before going. But he can't calm himself enough to think. He just knows that he needs to go to a crowded place. After walking for some time, he came to a food market. He felt pretty funny about this.

In this life, he has been to countless places. He's been to huge mansions and broken down shacks. He's seen girls of very high places, while been to the cheapest brothels. He's been in the cold, a place where noses might be frozen off, He Long Jiang [a river in the very northern part of China]. He's been to places so hot you can cook an egg on the ground.

He's seen sunrise from the tall mountain peaks. He's seen sunset on the ocean beach. He's even ate raw meat with local tribes in the uncivilized areas.

But this is the first time he's been to a food market.

On a winter morning, only the food market has so many people, such big crowds. No matter who comes here will no

not feel lonely.

Here are mothers holding their babies. Old man with crutches, cooks filled with oil.

All kinds of people, holding their baskets to buy food, arguing with the meat and vegetable sellers over small amounts of money.

Here there are the smell of raw fish, oily smell from fried food, and even stink from chickens and ducks.

Suddenly he heard someone in front yell, "We sell meat here. Fresh meat..."

Then the voice stopped.

The people in front then all stepped back, their faces very pale.

Only to hear someone from behind ask, "What's going on?"

The person in front said, "Someone's selling meat."

"There are over a dozen people here selling meat, what's problem?"

"But this person is selling a different kind of meat. He's selling human meat."

The driver raised his eyebrows, then split the crowd to take a look.

When he got close he became more shocked than everyone else.

The meat seller has a sign that says, "Yellow Cow, White Sheep. Kill now Sell now."

Behind the counter is a tall, large, fat one-eyed woman. Her hand holding a regular butcher knife.

But on the counter is a live person!

This person's clothes have been torn, showing a thin white body. Every single muscle shaking.

The one-eyed woman's left hand holds his neck, her right hand holds the knife. Her eyes filled with murderous rage.

The one-eyed woman looked at the driver a bit, then smiled, asking, "Are you here to buy meat?"

The driver look like he's frozen, and didn't hear what she said.

The one-eyed woman chuckled. "I knew for quite a while now that only you would buy this piece of meat. So I've been waiting for you."

Only then did the driver let out sigh. He smiled bitterly. "It's been years. Sister-in-law you..."

The one-eyed woman suddenly spit on the driver's face, then said angrily, "Sister-in-law? Who's your sister-in-law? If you call me that again, I'll cut out your tongue!"

For some reason, the driver would not respond.

The one-eyed woman continued. "You betrayed Weng Tian Jie. I bet you've become filthy rich by now, right? So how

come you would even hesitate to buy some meat?"

She suddenly grabbed that person's hair, asking, "Are you buying or not? If not, I guess I'll just kill him and feed him to the dogs."

The driver looked, said with a shock, "Mr. Mei Er, it's you!"

The person on the counter on had a blank look on his face. He just kept drooling, unable to talk. The driver then said, "Fine. I'll buy him."

The woman said, "If you want to buy him, then you have to follow me."

The driver bit his teeth, then said, "Fine. I'll go with you."

The woman then stared at him a bit more, said, "You're smart to agree. I've been searching for you for seventeen years now. Do you honestly think I'll let you escape?" The driver sighed. "Since you've found me, then I obviously have no intention of escaping."

At the bottom of the hill is a small house by the graveyard.

Inside is a person who has lived here for a long time. He just sat there, staring at a bowl strangely.

His eyes showed pain and anger. But it's not clear what he's thinking. The ground is already frozen, but he didn't seem to notice. After a while, sound came from outside.

This person suddenly grabbed an axe, asking, "Who?"

Outside the house that one-eyed woman responded, "It's me!"

This person suddenly became nervous, asking, “Is he really in town?”

The one-eyed woman said, “The Old Turtle’s information really is quite good. I already brought him back!”

He suddenly turned around and kneeled. His eyes filled with tears. He would not get up again for a long time.

Suddenly another set of steps came.

The one-eyed woman asked, “Who?”

Someone outside answered, “It’s seventh brother and myself.”

One man is a freckled, muscular man. His shoulder carrying lots of cabbage. The other is small and skinny. He’s a stinky-tofu seller.

At this moment both stared viciously at the driver. The cabbage seller grabbed him, spoke loudly, “Tie bastard[‘Tie’ is the driver’s last name], what more do you have to say?”

The one-eyed woman said, “Release him. If you have something to say, wait til everyone arrives first.”

The freckled man bit his teeth, but finally released him. Then bowed three times to the bowl on the table. His eyes also filled with tears.

In the next hour, three more people came in. One carried a medicine box, obviously a doctor. One carried wine, chicken and some cups. One is a blind fortune teller.

When these three people saw the driver, they're all filled with hate. All seven people just sat there. All with serious expressions. They look like they're ghosts, coming out of the underworld to seek revenge.

The driver is still expressionless, not saying a word.

The one-eyed woman suddenly asked, "Fifth brother, when can the third brother arrive?"

That wine-seller fat guy said, "He will be here. I have received his letter."

The one-eyed woman asks, "If so, then why is he still not here?"

The blind fortune-teller sighed, then said, "We've waited for seventeen years. Why does it matter to wait another hour or two?"

The one-eyed woman also sighed, saying, "Seventeen years, seventeen years..."

She must've said it seven or eight times, each time more dejected.

These seventeen years must have been hard on them. Countless bitterness must've surrounded this time, so much blood and tears!

That blind fortune-teller said, "In the past seventeen years, I've wanted to see Mr. Tie every single moment. Unfortunately now..."

He then asked, "What does he look like now? Fourth brother, tell me please."

The doctor said, "He looks about the same as seventeen years ago, except his beard is longer, his body a bit fatter?"

The blind man said, "Great. Great. Tie bastard, do you realize that in these seventeen years, I've prayed night and day for you to be healthy. Looks like Heaven has answered my prayers."

The one-eyed woman said while biting her teeth, "He betrayed Weng Tian Jie, so he's obviously a very rich man by now. How could he possibly be living our filthy lives?"

She pointed at that wine-seller. "Mr. An Le, fifth brother Zhang, is now selling wine. Second brother Yi is now blind. I bet you don't know these things, right?"

The driver would not say a word. He's afraid that if he opened his mouth, tears would follow.

Yet who could possibly understand the suffering he went through?

Suddenly someone yelled outside, "Sister-in-law. I have great news..."

Chapter 11: Saviour From the Sky

When the one-eyed woman heard someone yelling outside, she went out, asking, "What's so important that you have to scream so loudly?"

That person said, "I just saw Zhao Zheng Yi. He said that the Tie guy is at..."

As he spoke, he pushed the door open inside. When he got in, he suddenly froze. Because the person wanted to find is already here.

The one-eyed woman chuckled. "You didn't expect this, did you?"

That person let out a deep breath, then said, "Zhao Zheng Yi said he's at Long Xiao4 Yun's house. I didn't think..."

He immediately grabbed the woman's hand, asking, "How did you find him?"

She said, "I heard it from the Old Turtle, said he and Li Xun Huan are coming here. So we followed all the way. I originally was afraid of Li Xun Huan, so I didn't dare to make a move. Who would've thought that he left Li Xun Huan?"

The last person that came in is wearing some ripped-up clothing. He's the only one of the eight dressed like a person

in the martial world, wearing a spear on his back.

After a while, he stared at the driver and yelled, "Tie Zhuan Jia, Do you still remember me?"

Tie Zhuan Jia nodded, "How are you..."

That person said, "I'm doing great. Since I've never done anything immoral, I never had to hide all the time. So my days must be better than yours, right?"

The freckled guy said, "Third brother, why are you still talking to him? Just kill him now. Kill him to sacrifice to the big brother."

Bian Hao responded, "Seventh brother. What you're saying is wrong. Yes we are here to kill someone. But we have to do it formally, so no one can say anything about it."

The blind man added, "We all ready waited for seventeen years, a bit longer won't kill us."

After saying this phrase twice, no one can say anything anymore.

The one-eyed woman asked, "How are we going to do that then?"

Bian Hao said, "Not only do we have to get the whole story right, we also have to find an judge. If everyone thinks that this Tie guy should die, then we can kill him."

The freckled man jumped up, saying, "Why all the fuss? I won't believe there's a single person who'd feel that he doesn't deserve to die!"

The blind man said coldly, "If that's the case, then what's the problem with asking?"

The freckled man bit his teeth, then said, "Who do you plan on asking?"

Bian Hao said, "The person I've invited not only is totally objective, but also has nothing to do with us 'Eight Righteous of Central Plains' or Tie Zhuan Jia."

"Just say who it is."

Bian Hao said, "The first person is 'Totally Objective Iron Face' Zhao Zheng Yi. This person is..."

Tie Zhuan Jia suddenly laughed, "You people don't have to go through all that trouble. Just kill me and get it over with. I admit that I betrayed Weng Tian Jie, so I do not regret dying today."

The one-eyed woman said, "Looks like he doesn't seem to like this Zhao Zheng Yi."

The blind man said, "Since Zhao Zheng Yi told third brother of his location, they must've had some problems. So how can he be objective in this matter?"

Bian Hao said, "It's still ok, because I found two more people in addition to him. One is the 'Fast Brush' elder. This person is considered the best writer today. Plus he has absolutely no relationship with the martial world. The third is a new kid..."

The one-eyed woman said, "What could a new kid know?"

Bian Hao said, "Although this person is new to the martial world, he has a strong personality, can be considered a true

man. Although I've only known him for two days, I know that he's definitely trustworthy!"

The one-eyed woman said with a cold laugh. "You know what kind of person he is in just two days? Looks like your habit of making friends didn't change."

She then added, "It was you who way back when brought this Tie guy here, saying that he's a good person. If we hadn't became friends with him, then how could Weng Tian Jie die so early?"

Bian Huo lowered his head and did not speak anymore.

But the blind man said, "No matter what, it's good to get some witnesses. We should not kill for no reason."

He laughed, then said, "Since third brother already brought them here, then we should invite them inside."

Tie Zhuan Jie swore to never open his eyes again. He really didn't want to see that Zhao Zheng Yi's face again.

He decided to not say a single word either.

He then heard footsteps. Two people came in.

The first one's footsteps are very heavy, showing great inner power. 'South fist North Legs'. Zhao Zheng Yi is from the north, so most of his kung fu has to do with his legs. The second person breathed pretty hard, showing that even if he knows kung fu, it's not that great. He did not heard a third person's steps.

Could it be that the third person's footsteps have no sound?

The blind person got up, then said, "Due to a little misfortune of one of our brothers from long ago, we had to ask three people to come here. Then wait in the snowstorm. I'm terribly sorry about everything."

His voice is flat. The speed neither fast nor slow. No one can tell if his words are genuine or just pretending.

Only to hear Zhao Zheng Yi said with a booming voice, "In order to bring justice to the martial world, I would even be willing to die. Mr. Yi[the blind guy] do not need to be so thoughtful.

When this person speaks, it's bound to be bright and virtuous. But Tie Zhuan Jia just want to vomit when he hears it.

Only to hear another person speak with a calm but crisp voice. "I'm only a scholar. But I have heard stories of gallant heroes in the martial world. I'm grateful that people here think enough of me to be a judge here."

The blind man said, "I hope you will write this whole story as told, so when others bring it up, they would know that what we did was right."

The old scholar said, "Of course. When I get back, I'll certainly write down the whole truth. When Mr. Bian asked me to come, he also had this in mind."

Tie Zhuan Jia finally understood why Bian Huo invited this person here. He felt respect for Bian Huo for being so meticulous.

Only to hear the one-eyed woman said, "But who is this gentleman here? Can you tell us your name?"

This question is aimed at the third person.

The third person did not speak. But Bian Huo replied, "My friend here doesn't like others to know his name."

The blind man said coldly, "His name has nothing to do with this anyway. If he doesn't want to say, then we don't need to ask. But he should know our names."

Bian Huo immediately said, "We are eight brothers, called 'Eight Righteous of Central Plains' by our friends in the martial world. But they're really making too big a deal out of it."

The blind person cut in, "They're not exaggerating. Although our kung fu and looks might not be stand out, we do things with righteousness as our number one priority."

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "Who doesn't know the famous 'Eight Righteous of Central Plains'?"

The blind man said, "I am second brother Yi Ming Hu. I used to be called, 'Lighting Quick Eyes'. Now..." He continued with a smile, "Now I'm called 'Have Eyes but no Eyeballs'."

The doctor said, "I believe you know my third brother 'Fast Horse Amazing Spear' Bian Hao. I'm the fourth brother. My name is Jin Feng Bai."

The scholar said, "From your voice, it seems like you're from Nan Yang."

"Correct."

The scholar said, "There's a Jin family medicine shop* in Nan

Yang that's very famous. I even bought some medicine there once. Are you..."

Jin Feng Bai laughingly said, "What's the big deal? Even the Wan family's young master is now selling chicken feet."

The old scholar asked, "And who would that be?"

The wine-seller said, "Obviously me."

[Note: chicken feet is a famous dish to serve with wine. So some wine-sellers sell chicken feet too. I personally can't drink, so I never get all these special dishes that are suppose to 'go with wine'. Chicken feet is just nasty, in my opinion.]

The freckled man then added, "I'm the seventh brother, called Gong Sun Yu. Because my freckles are tighter than raindrops ['Yu' means rain in Chinese]."

The vegetable seller said, "I'm the eighth brother."

The scholar asked, "But where is your big brother?"

Gong Sun Yu said, "My big brother Weng Tian Hao was killed. This is his wife, Mrs. Weng. But you should also remember her name."

The scholar smiled along, "Although I am an old man, my memory is still fairly good."

Mrs. Weng said, "We want you to remember our names not to become more famous, but so we can spread our sad tale. This way, people in the martial world will know the truth."

Gong Sun Yu added, "This person is called Tie Chuan Jia. He's the person who killed our big brother!"

Jin Feng Bai said, "Our eight brothers had always been very close. Although we all have our things to do, we always gather every new year at our big brother's house."

Zhang Cheng Xun added, "The eight of us originally were happy together, so none of us really bothered to seek other friends. But on that year, third brother brought a person to the annual gathering. He said that person was his friend."

Gong Sun Yu cut in bitterly, "This person is the ungrateful bastard that would betray friends for money, Tie Chuan Jia."

Jin Bai Feng said, "Big brother was a person who's not afraid of death. When he saw that Tie Chuan Jie look like a real man, he treated Tie Chuan Jie as a friend too. Who'd have thought that he's not a man, but rather a dog!"

Zhang Cheng Xun said, "After the new year we all left. But big brother wanted him to stay two extra months. It was at this time that he secretly contacted some of big brother's enemies. They attacked at night, killing big brother. Although his wife did not die, she still suffered major injuries."

Mrs. Weng yelled, "Do you see this scar on my face? This cut almost split my face in half. If they didn't think I was already dead, I could not have escaped."

Gong Sun Yu said, "That day everyone else in the house died, so no one knows who did it."

Jin Feng Bai said, "When we found out, we immediately dropped everything and vowed revenge. Fortunately, Heaven has eyes..."

Mrs. Weng said, "Now that we have told our story. Please say

if this person deserve to die or not.”

Zhao Zheng Yi said, “If you say the truth, then even if we slice him into a thousand pieces, it would still not make up for his crime.”

Gong Sun Yu jumped up and said angrily, “Every single word is the truth. If you don’t believe us, ask him yourself.”

Tie Chuan Jia said while biting his teeth, “I’ve said long before. I am ashamed of my actions. So I am willing to die.”

Gong Sun Yu then yelled, “See! He admits it himself!”

The scholar said, “He really is very vicious and devious.”

Mrs. Weng said, “If this is the case, then the three of you must all believe he deserve to die, right?”

The scholar said, “Yes!”

Zhao Zheng Yi said, “Not just kill him, but cut him into a thousand pieces, to bring back righteousness to the martial world.”

Only to hear another voice say, “You keep saying ‘martial world’. Do you represent the martial world?”

This voice is crisp and direct. Each word like a sword, cold and fast.

This is the first time he spoke in this room. He must be that ‘third’ person who can walk without sound.

Tie Chuan Jia’s heart suddenly jumped. He realized that he knows this voice.

He couldn't help but open his eyes, finding out that the person by Zhao Zheng Yi's side is that lonely youngster, Ah Fei!"

Master Fei? Why are you here?

Tie Chuan Jia almost blurted out those words. But he held his mouth.

But Zhao Zheng Yi's mood changed. "Does this mean that you feel he shouldn't die?"

Ah Fei said coldly, "If I feel that he doesn't deserve to die, will you kill me too?"

Yi Ming Hu said, "We brought you here for justice. If you can give us a good reason to let him go, we will do so immediately."

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "I think he just wants to stir up trouble. Why bother to reason with him?"

Ah Fei looked at him. Then said calmly, "You say he betrayed his friends for riches, but aren't you the same? That day at Weng's house, aren't you also one of the attackers? It's just that Mrs. Weng did not see you!"

The brothers all look shocked, asking, "Is he saying the truth?"

Ah Fei said, "He wants to kill this person only to silence him!"

Zhao Zheng Yi originally was very calm, but now he started to shiver.

“Bull...”

Angrily, he almost started to use obscenities . But then realized at the last second that such words aren't useful.

[Actually the half spoken obscenity is 'let out your mom's dog fart'. But it has the same effect as saying BS. ^_^]

Instead he said with a cold smile. "I never realized that such a youngster like you can lie so well. Good thing these are your words alone. No one will believe you!"

Ah Fei said, "Really? But why should we believe their words then?"

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "Mr. Tie has admitted his guilt. Didn't you hear?"

Ah Fei said, "I heard."

Before he finished those words, his sword is already at Zhao Zheng Yi's throat!

Zhao Zheng Yi has been through hundreds of battles. It's not easy to sneak up on him. Yet for some reason, he could even see how this youngster pulled out his sword!

He just saw a blur, and the sword is already at his throat. He froze, then said, "What... what do you want?"

Ah Fei said, "I just want to ask you. That day at Weng's house, were you there?"

Zhao Zheng Yi yelled angrily, "You're crazy!"

Ah Fei said calmly, "If you don't admit it, then I'll just have to kill you!"

He said those words with a normal tone, as if he's just joking.

Sweat poured down Zhao Zheng Yi face. "I... I..."

Ah Fei said, "You better answer correctly. Pray that you don't say a single wrong word."

Everyone had seen the sword on Ah Fei's waist. They all thought it was pretty funny. But now, no one still feel that way.

Ah Fei kept on talking. "This is the last time I'm going to ask you. I will not repeat again! Did you kill Weng Tian Hao?"

Zhao Zheng Yi could not help but say quietly, "Yes..."

When he said these words, the brothers were simply shocked beyond belief.

Ah Fei suddenly smiled, said, "Please don't worry. He had nothing to do with Weng Tian Hao's death."

Now the brothers just stared at him.

Ah Fei said, "I just wanted to present a point. That is, when a person admits his guilt under pressure, it useless to use it as evidence!"

But the brothers asked, "When did we pressure him?"

"Did you think we beat him until he admitted?"

"If that's the case, why doesn't he say anything?"

Yi Ming Hu suddenly said, "Tie Chuan Jia, if you feel that you've wronged, please say so now."

Tie Chuan Jia just bit his teeth tightly, his face filled with pain.

Mrs. Weng said, "Since you have nothing to say, it means you've admit it. We never put a sword to your throat."

Tie Chuan Jia sighed, "Master Fei. I really have nothing to say. I'm sorry that your kindness is in vain."

Ah Fei said, "No matter what he says, I still do not believe he's that kind of person."

Gong Sun Yu said, "Look at the facts. You can't argue with it."

Mrs. Weng laughed coldly. "Who cares if he doesn't believe us. Why should we care about him?"

Jin Feng Bai said, "That's right. This has nothing to do with him anyway."

Mrs. Weng said angrily, "Who do you think you are? Minding our business."

The doctor said, "So what if I hurt him? What are you going to do?"

The doctor usually say the least words. And move the quickest. Before he finished, his axe has already cut down. The move, 'Splitting Mount Hua', is what he's most famous for. Tie Chuan Jia just sat there, only waiting for the axe to split him in two.

The scholar gasped, knowing he'll see blood.

Who'd have thought that at this moment, the sword shined, instantly cutting the axe in half. The top fell before Tie Chuan Jia. The brothers all saw this sequence, no one could believe their eyes. Before anyone can speak, Ah Fei's sword has reached the throat of that doctor.

When Ah Fei attacked Zhao Zheng Yi, everyone thought it wasn't a big deal, as it's a sneak attack. But when he made this move, everyone could not help but look shocked.

They just can't believe that such a fast sword exists!

Yet Ah Fei just act as if everything's normal. He pulled Tie Chuan Jia up, then said. "Let's go drink some wine."

Gong Sun Yu, Jin Feng Bai, and Bian Hao all blocked their bath.

Jin Feng Bai said, "Do you want to leave now? I don't think it's that easy."

Ah Fei said calmly, "What do you want me to do? Do you want me to kill you?"

Yi Ming Hu suddenly sighed, "Let him go."

Mrs. Weng said, "How can we let him go? All that effort wasted..."

Yi Ming Hu continued, "You can go. This is the way the martial world is anyway. Whoever has the fastest sword is right!"

Ah Fei said, "Thanks for your word of advice. I will never forget it."

Mrs. Weng is already in tears. "How can we let him go... How can we let him go!"

Yi Ming Hu still did not show any emotions. "What do you want then? Do you really want him to kill us all?"

Bian Hao said, "Second brother is right. As long as we stay alive, we can get our revenge later."

Mrs. Weng suddenly went over and grabbed his shirt. "You have the guts to talk? This is another one of your 'friend'. It's the second time..."

Bian Hao said, "You're right. I did bring him. I will hold myself accountable." As he said this, he left the room.

Mrs. Weng gasped, then yelled, "Third brother. Come back!"

But when she chased him out the room, he's already nowhere to be seen.

Yi Ming Hu sighed, then said. "Let him go. Hopefully, he can find that friend of his."

Jin Feng Bai's eyes brightened. "You mean..."

Yi Ming Hu said, "Since you know who I'm talking about, why bother asking?"

Jin Feng Bai said, "If third brother really can find him, then no matter how fast this youngster is, he still won't escape."

Zhao Zheng Yi suddenly laughed. "Actually, Mr. Bian do not

need to find that person.”

“Really?”

Zhao Zheng Yi said, “In the next two days, three people will come here. Even if that youngster has three heads and six arms, I can still guarantee that all three heads will come off!”

Jin Feng Bai asked, “Which three?”

Zhao Zheng Yi said, “If I said their names, you’d probably all be shocked.”

Chapter 12: Both are Heart-Broken People

Although it's still noon, the sky is as cloudy as dusk.

Ah Fei walked calmly, just as the way he walked when Tie Chuan Jia first saw him. Still so lonely, so worn out.

But now Tie Chuan Jia knows. If there was danger, this youngster would immediately become alert. Walking besides him, Tie Chuan Jia wanted to say so many things, but doesn't know where to start. Li Xun Huan never talked much. And being with Li Xun Huan for so many years, he knows how to use silence to replace words. He only said two words, "Thank you."

He immediately realized that even these two words aren't necessary. Because Ah Fei and Li Xun Huan are the same. One never has to use the words 'Thank you' in front of them.

There's a pavilion here. Ah Fei walked over to it, then suddenly asked, "Why didn't you tell them the truth?"

Tie Chuan Jia thought for a long time, then sighed, "There are some things I would rather die than say."

Ah Fei said, "You really are a great friend, but you're wrong about one thing."

“What’s that?”

Ah Fei said, “You think that since life is your own’s, you have the right to die!”

“So am I wrong?”

Ah Fei said, “Of course it’s wrong.”

He suddenly turned around, staring at Tie Chuan Jia, then said, “When someone is born, it’s not to die.”

Tie Chuan Jia said, “You’re right. If it weren’t for dire circumstances...”

Ah Fei said, “Even if you must die, you still have to do anything you can to live.”

He continued to stare at Tie Chuan Jia, said crisply, “God has done much for you. What have you done for him?”

“Nothing.”

“In order to raise you, your mother and father must have given so much. What have you done for them?”

Tie Chuan Jia can only lower his head.

Ah Fei said, “You know that some things can never be spoken. If you say it, then you’ll be betraying a friend. But if you simply die like this, aren’t you betraying your parents, betraying God?”

Tie Chuan Just stared into the sky, then said, “I was wrong. I was wrong...”

He looks as if he suddenly made a big decision. "I didn't want to say it, because..."

Ah Fei cut him off, "I trust you. You don't have to explain."

Tie Chuan Jia could not help asking, "But how can you be sure that I did not do what they claimed?"

Ah Fei said, "I just know."

His eyes very bright, filled with confidence. Then he continued, "This might be because I grew up in the wild. So like beasts, I have a knack for distinguishing between good and evil."

In Li Xun Huan's mind, if there's one thing worse than not being able to drink, it's to drink with annoying people.

He feels that of the people here, all are extremely annoying. Comparatively speaking, You Long Sheng is actually the best of the bunch. At least he doesn't kiss up to others.

So all he can do is pretend to be sick.

Long Xiao4 Yun knows his temper, so he did not say anything. Therefore, Li Xun Huan simply lied on his bed, waiting for night to fall.

He knows that lots of interesting things will happen tonight.

When he thought of the date with Lin Xin Er tonight, his eyes brightened. But when he thought of Tie Chuan Jia, he became gloomy again.

It's finally dark.

Just as Li Xun Huan got up, he heard light footsteps in the snow outside. So he immediately lied back down again.

Just at this moment, the footsteps have reached the window.

Li Xun Huan did not do anything. He didn't ask who it is. Since the person was afraid to come in, he can't be Long Xiao4 Yun. Long Xiao4 Yun would never pace outside the room.

So who could it be?

Shi Yin?

All the blood in his body shot up to his head. He couldn't help but shiver. But then the person outside lightly coughed.

"Is brother Li already asleep?"

This is the voice of You Long Sheng. Li Xun Huan let out a sigh of relief. He doesn't know whether to be happy or sad.

You Long Sheng came in and sat down. His eyes never looking once at Li Xun Huan. Li Xun Huan lit up the candle, and suddenly saw that the youngster's face is pale.

Li Xun Huan asked with a smile, "Do you want tea, or wine?"

You Long Sheng said, "Wine."

Li Xun Huan smiled. "Good. I never keep tea in my room."

You Long Sheng immediately drank three cups. Then asked,

“Do you know why I’m drinking wine?”

Li Xun Huan said, “You probably don’t have any to be sad about, so could it be to gain courage?”

You Long Sheng stared at him. Then suddenly burst out laughing.

At this moment, he pulled out the sword on his waist.

He suddenly stopped laughing. Then asked, “Do you recognize this sword?”

Li Xun Huan lightly touched the side of the sword, then said, “Excellent sword!”

You Long Sheng’s eyes flickered. “Since brother Li is also a sword expert, I’m sure you know that this sword is one of the most famous in the world.”

He looked at the sword and said, “This is the ‘Love Snatching Sword’ used by the famous Di Wu Zi 300 years ago. But I’m sure brother Li has not heard of the story behind it, right?”

“Please do tell.”

“Di Wu Zi was madly in love with his sword, so he did not fall in love with a woman until he’s middle-aged. They planned on getting married. But a few days before the wedding, he found his fiancée and his good friend ‘Sabre God’ Peng Qiong meet secretly. In his anger, he killed Peng Qiong with this sword. Then the sword became his sole companion, for he no longer cared for marriage.”

He looked at Li Xun Huan. “You might think that this is a simple, straightforward, boring story. However, it is true

story.”

Li Xun Huan smiled, then said, “I just feel that while this Di Wu Zi is an excellent swordsman, he’s a bit narrow-minded. Why would a true man jeopardize friendship over a woman?”

You Long Sheng also smiled, then said, “Yet I seem to feel that he is a true man. Only a true man will fall so deeply in love.”

Li Xun Huan chuckled. “I’m thinking you want to emulate Di Wu Zi from 300 years ago, right?”

You Long Sheng stared at Li Xun Huan with icy cold eyes, then said coldly, “This depends on whether brother Li wants to emulate ‘Sabre God’ Peng Qiong from 300 years ago!”

Li Xun Huan sighed. “You know, the moon is very beautiful tonight. Why would you disrupt such a nice scenery with such words?”

You Long Sheng said, “In that case, I take it you’ll definitely go there tonight!”

Li Xun Huan said, “If I leave a girl like Ms. Lin to watch the moon alone tonight, I’d feel like a criminal.”

You Long Sheng’s pale face suddenly turned red. His anger readily apparent. The sword turned, aiming at the side of Li Xun Huan’s neck.

Yet Li Xun Huan still kept his smile. “With your swordsmanship, you’re not quite good enough to emulate Di Wu Zi.”

You Long Sheng said angrily, “I don’t even need to use my

full abilities to kill you.”

Even as they speak You Long Sheng has attacked ten times.

Only to hear the sound of sword splitting the wind, quick and loud. The wine cups on the table have all been shattered the wind generated by the sword. Wine spilled all over the floor. Although his each sword stroke faster than the last, Li Xun Huan just seemingly stood there. As if nothing's happening. Every single stroke missed.

You Long Sheng bit his teeth. His strokes made with more and more urgency.

He saw that Li Xun Huan's hands are empty. So each sword stroke was made to keep Li Xun Huan from using his dagger.

Yet Li Xun Huan doesn't seem to any intention of using his dagger, instead waited for this set of attacks to end. Then he suddenly smiled, said, “For someone your age, your sword skills are amazing. However, for someone with a father and a teacher like you, if you were to travel around, your teacher and father's reputations would be shattered.”

Incredibly enough, he still talks freely even while under a barrage of attacks. You Long Sheng became more and more impatient and angry. Yet for some reason, his strokes always miss Li Xun Huan's clothes.

When he tried to attack Li Xun Huan's throat, Li Xun Huan would twist his body left. When he tried to change his aim to the left, he'd find that Li Xun Huan did not really move. So although all his attacks are some of the most deadly in the world, they could still not harm Li Xun Huan.

You Long Sheng bit his teeth tightly, his next stroke aimed

directly at Li Xun Huan's chest. Thinking, "No matter what you do this time, I would not fall for your tricks anymore."

After getting tricked by Li Xun Huan so many times, he determined that he will not change the direction of his attack anymore.

Only to see Li Xun Huan's left shoulder moved slightly, twisting his body to the right. This time he really did move! You Long Sheng missed again.

At this moment, Li Xun Huan flicked his fingers at the side of the sword.

You Long Sheng suddenly felt a powerful vibration. His whole body instantly became paralyzed, unable to control his sword. The sword then suddenly shot out of his hand, out the window, and into the woods.

Li Xun Huan's still just standing there. His feet hasn't moved an inch all this time.

You Long felt all his blood rushing to his head, then all dropped back down to his feet. His whole body became cold. Li Xun Huan tapped his shoulder with a smile, then said, "Your sword is very precious. You should go get it."

You Long Sheng stomped his feet. Then turned around and rushed out. But suddenly stopped. He said, "If... if you have guts, wait a year. A year later I'll come to seek my revenge."

Li Xun Huan said, "A year? I'm afraid a year won't be enough."

He then added, "You have nice potential. Your swordsmanship is also pretty good. The problem is your

temper. You're too impatient and proud. So when you meet a foe stronger than you, you immediately fall apart. Actually, if you had patience today, it's quite possible for you to injure me." You Long Sheng's eyes immediately brightened, but before he can say anything, Li Xun Huan continued, "But patience is something easier said than done. So if you want to beat me, you need at least seven years!"

Li Xun Huan then said with a smile, "You can go now. Go practice for seven years and then come to seek your revenge. Seven years is not a long time."

The night resumed its peacefulness.

Li Xun Huan looked at the night sky through the window, stood there quietly for a long time. Then said into the distance, "Youngster, you shouldn't hate me. Actually, I'm trying to save you. If you stay with Lin Xian Er, she'll ruin your life."

He brushed off the dust on his clothes, then walked out the room.

He knows that Lin Xian Er is waiting for him, and that she also prepared another trick. He's quite intrigued as to what she has in mind.

When You Long Sheng left, he's no longer that proud, that cold. He told Li Xun Huan, "If you really like Lin Xian Er, you'll regret it. She's already mine. We've already had...had... Why would you wear my old shoes?"

Yet Li Xun Huan just smiled. "Old shoes are always more comfortable than new ones."

When he thought of You Long Sheng's expression as he left,

he felt very sympathetic, yet also kind of funny. But is Lin Xian Er really that kind of a girl?

As he walked out the door, he suddenly saw light coming from the forest.

Two servants came, each with a lantern, and are whispering to each other, and secretly laughing. Yet when they saw Li Xun Huan, they stopped whispering and laughing.

Yet Li Xun Huan instead started to chuckle, he asked, “Did Ms. Lin ask you to come get me?”

The servant on the left is a bit older and taller. She said, “Actually, it’s our Lady who wants to meet Mr. Li.”

Li Xun Huan shockingly said, “Lady?”

He then asked nervously, “Which lady?”

The younger servant could not help but chuckle. “There’s only one Lady in this house.”

Li Xun Huan’s body is still there, but his mind has already wondered outside the forest. Flew into that little building...

Ten years ago, he constantly went there. He remembers that the table there always has his favorite food.

As Li Xun Huan walk hastily, he’s back at this little building again.

The light upstairs is very pleasant. The same as it was ten years ago. Even the snow on the ceiling are just as lovely as they were ten years ago.

However, ten years still passed...

It's ten years that can never be taken back.

Li Xun Huan just couldn't get up his courage to go up the stairs.

Yet he has to go.

No matter why she asked him to come, he has no reason to reject her.

He froze immediately upon reaching the top of the stairs.

Ten long years, all seemed to have disappeared at this very instant. It's as if he just traveled back to ten years ago. His heart started pounding, like a youngster with his first love. The warmth of ten years ago... The dreams of ten years ago...

Li Xun Huan wouldn't dare to keep on thinking. To do so would be betraying Long Xiao4 Yun, as well as himself. He wanted to run away.

But at this time, he heard someone say from behind the curtain, "Please sit down."

The voice is just as beautiful as it was ten years ago. Yet now it's so distant, so cold. If it weren't for those familiar dishes on the table, he almost wouldn't believe that he's meeting a close friend.

He can only sit down and say, "Thank you."

Then a person came out from the back room.

Li Xun Huan almost stopped breathing. The person coming out is only a child. He's still wearing the same red clothes, yet his face as white as a sheet of paper.

The voice from behind the curtain said, "Don't forget what mom just told you. Go pour a cup of wine for your uncle Li."

The red child said, "Yes."

Li Xun Huan doesn't know what to think or say. Even though he did nothing wrong, he could still not help but feel like a criminal in front of this child.

Shi Yin, Shi Yin. Is the purpose of your invitation to torture me?

How could he possibly drink this wine? Yet how could he not drink it?"

The red child said, "Although your nephew can no longer practice kung fu anymore, a true man cannot live under his parents his whole life. So I hope uncle Li can teach me some defense skills. So your nephew will not be bullied later in his life."

Li Xun Huan sighed inside, then took out his hand. The hand has a small dagger on it.

Lin Shi Yin said from behind the curtain, "Your uncle has never taught anyone his dagger skills. If you learn it, you won't have to worry about others bullying you. Go thank your uncle Li."

The red child really did kneel on the ground, said, "Thank you uncle Li."

Li Xun Huan smiled, but he thought, "Nothing beats the love a mother has for her child. Yet I wonder how a child treats his mother?"

The servant has taken away the child, yet Lin Shi Yin is still behind the curtain. She would not let Li Xun Huan leave.

Li Xun Huan has always been a very confident person. Yet for some strange reason, he could only sit there like an idiot.

The night becomes even darker.

Is Lin Xian Er still waiting for him?

Lin Shi Yin suddenly asked, "Do you have something you need to do?"

Li Xun Huan replied, "N...no."

Lin Shi Yin paused for a second, then said, "You must've seen Xian Er already."

Li Xun Huan said, "One or two times."

Lin Shi Yin said, "She's a poor child. She grew up in a bad environment. If you've seen her dad, you'd know what I mean."

"I know."

Lin Shi Yin said, "One year I went to the 'Sacrifice Cliff' to pray, I saw her about to jump down the cliffs. So I saved her... Do you know why she wanted to jump off the cliff?"

Li Xun Huan replied, "No."

Lin Shi Yin said, "Because of her father's illness."

Li Xun Huan could only sit there.

Lin Shi Yin continued, "Not only is she very smart and pretty, she's also very proud. She knows that she's from a poor family, and need to rely on others for many things. She's always afraid that others would look down on her."

Li Xun Huan said, "I'm thinking no one would look down upon her today, right?"

Lin Shi Yin said, "This is due to her perseverance over the years. Unfortunately, she's still too young, her heart's too soft. I'm always afraid that she would fall for other people's tricks."

Li Xun Huan laughed bitterly. "If others won't fall for her tricks, I'd be happy."

Lin Shi Yin said, "I just want her to find a good husband, and not get duped without knowing what's going on. Then live in pain for the rest of her life."

Li Xun Huan thought for a second, then asked, "Why are you saying this to me?"

Lin Shi Yin thought for a second, then said, "Why am I saying this to you, you don't know?"

He did indeed figured it all out.

The reason Lin Shi Yin kept him here is to prevent his meeting with Lin Xian Er. Obviously, You Long Sheng told her this.

Lin Shi Yin said, "No matter what, we're old friends. I want to ask you a favor."

Li Xun Huan's heart felt cold, yet he still smiled. "You don't want me to go see Lin Xian Er."

"Correct."

Li Xun Huan took a deep breath, then said, "You... you think I like her?"

Lin Shi Yin said, "I don't care how you feel about her. Just do me this favor."

Li Xun Huan finished the whole cup of wine in front of him in one gulp, then said, "You're right. I'm an useless wanderer. If I were to see her, I'd be hurting her..."

Chapter 13: Strange Disaster

Lin Shi Yin said, "So you agree?"

Li Xun Huan bit his teeth. "But don't you know that I've always liked to hurt people?"

He got up and said, "Good night."

Lin Shi Yin's said with a trembling voice, "Since you've already left, why come back again? We've been living so peacefully. Why... why come back and cause us trouble?"

Li Xun Huan needed all his energy to keep his mouth closed. Yet his lips still tremble.

Lin Shi Yin's voice suddenly became venomous. "Is it not enough that you've ruined my son? Do you have to ruin her too?"

Her face is just that pale, that beautiful. Her eyes filled with distress, with pain. She has never lost her composure in front of anyone else before.

Could all this be just for Lin Xian Er?

Li Xun Huan did not turn back.

He doesn't have the courage to turn back, to look at her.

He walked quickly down the stairs, then said calmly,
"Actually, you didn't really have to plead with me. Because I don't like her one bit!"

Lin Shi Yin watched as he left. Her body suddenly lost all energy as she fell to the floor.

The pond has turned into ice. There's a bridge over the pond.

Li Xun Huan sat on the side of the bridge, staring aimlessly at the pond.

His heart just like this pond.

He could see light coming from Lin Xian Er's room far away. Is Lin Xian Er still waiting for him?

He knows that there's a reason why Lin Xian Er asked him to go. He also knows that if he goes, lots of interesting things will happen. Yet he still just sat there, staring at the candlelight far away.

He started to cough endlessly again.

Suddenly, he saw a shadow from that house. Li Xun Huan immediately gathered himself and flew over.

His steps are quick beyond description. Yet he by the time he got there, the shadow had already disappeared.

Li Xun Huan wondered to himself, "Did I make a mistake?"

He opened the window, then said softly, "Ms. Lin."

There's no response.

Li Xun Huan looked around. He saw wine spilled all over the floor. Then on the table, he saw a single plum flower!

The Plum Flower Bandit!

Could Lin Xian Er be in the hands of the Plum Flower Bandit?

Li Xun Huan picked up the wine cup, sweat came out of his palms.

At this instant, he heard a faint sound, and the candlelight immediately went out. Then came countless hidden weapons from all directions.

Yet of all the hidden weapons in the world, which can come close to Little Li's Dagger!

Li Xun Huan twisted his body, his hands already caught 18 weapons. The rest bounced off his foot.

He then heard a loud shout from outside.

"Plum Flower Bandit. You can't escape. Come out and die!"

"No matter how good you are, we can still make you die a terrible death!"

"I won't lie to you. Seventh Master Tian from Luo Yang is here. Plus Mr. Gong Sun, the Venerable Zhao, and Fourth Master Long.

Li Xun Huan shook his head, then said silently, "Tian Qi* really did come."

*[Tian Qi is Seventh Master Tian. “Qi” means seven.]

Then he heard someone said, “Since you’re here, why don’t you come out?”

Li Xun Huan coughed lightly, then spoke with a thick voice, “Since you’re all here, why don’t you come in?”

People outside start to talk among themselves, “Looks like this guy wants to lure us into the room.”

Then one booming voice rose above the chatter. “The Plum Flower Bandit can only sneak around in the dark. Why would he have the guts to meet us?” Everyone else also immediately echoed this, trying to get the person inside to come out.

Then they heard, “Right, the Plum Flower Bandit does tend to sneak around, but what does that have to do with me?”

That booming voice then said, “If you’re not the Plum Flower Bandit, then who are you?”

Another voice said, “Mr. Gong Sun, why bother to ask him? The venerable Zhao could not have been mistaken. This person must be the Plum Flower Bandit.”

Li Xun Huan suddenly burst out laughing. “Zhao Zheng Yi, I knew this was all your doing.” In the middle of the laugh, he shot out the window and into the crowd. Everyone took a step backward.

Then Long Xiao⁴ Yun said loudly, “Everyone stop. This is my brother Li Xun Huan!”

Li Xun Huan looked immediately at Zhao Zheng Yi. He said with a smile, "Mr. Zhao really has great eyesight. If my hands and feet weren't so agile, I'm afraid I'd already be the Plum Flower Bandit's dead body double."

Zhao Zheng Yi's face is pure green. He said coldly, "Someone hid here in the middle of the night. If I don't think that person is the Plum Flower Bandit, then who could it be? How could I know that you're suddenly no longer ill, then secretly came here."

Li Xun Huan said calmly, "I don't have to secretly come here. I can go anywhere I want. Besides, How could the venerable Zhao know that the lady did not invite me here?"

Zhao Zheng Yi laughed. "I don't know what your relationship is with Ms. Lin. But everyone knows that Ms. Lin could not possibly come here tonight."

"Really?"

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "In order to avoid the Plum Flower Bandit, she moved out earlier today."

Li Xun Huan said, "If that's the case, you can at least make sure you've got the right person before attacking."

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "In order to beat people like the Plum Flower Bandit, one must take the initiative. Otherwise, we run the risk of him escaping."

All his words are logical and righteous. They sound irrefutable.

Li Xun Huan laughed loudly. "Very nice 'taking the initiative'. Looks like if I died today in your hands, I can only

blame it on bad luck, and not you.”

Long Xiao4 Yun coughed twice, then forced a smile. “It’s easy for one to make a mistake in the middle of the night. Besides...”

Zhao Zheng Yi then said coldly, “Besides, maybe I didn’t make a mistake.”

Li Xun Huan said, “Oh? So you’re saying that I am the Plum Flower Bandit?”

Zhao Zheng Yi laughed. “Maybe, maybe not. Everyone only knows that the Plum Flower Bandit’s lightness kung fu is very good. His speed amazing. But whether his name is Zhang, or Li, no one knows.”

Li Xun Huan said, “You’re right. My lightness kung fu is certainly quite nice. My speed also decent. The time the Plum Flower Bandit reappeared is about the same time I came back. If I’m not the Plum Flower Bandit, then something must be wrong.”

He chuckled. Then stared at Zhao Zheng Yi. “Yet if you’re so certain that I’m the Plum Flower Bandit, then why don’t you capture me now?”

Zhao Zheng Yi said, “It doesn’t matter when I capture you. Besides, I have Tian Qi and Muo Yun here. Do you really think you can escape?”

Long Xiao4 Yun’s face turned pale. He said, “Come on. We’re just joking around, right? Let’s not be serious. I can promise everyone that he’s not the Plum Flower Bandit.”

Zhao Zheng Yi said, “No one can joke about something like

this. You two haven't seen each other in such a long time. How could you be so sure?"

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "But... but I know what kind of person he is."

One person suddenly said, "You might know a person, but you don't know his heart. Fourth Master Long surely must've heard of this saying."

This person is thin as a stick. His face shriveled, looking like ill old man. Yet his voice is crispy clear. This is the famous Gong Sun Muo Yun."

Another person appeared behind him. This person looking like a rich young master. He chuckled and said, "That's right. I, Tian Qi, has been a long time friend of Li Xun Huan. Yet when something like this happens, I can only set aside our friendship."

Li Xun Huan said, "Although I have many friends. Yet I don't think I've ever had a friend in such a high place as Tian Qi."

Tian Qi's face changed. His eyes screamed murder.

Everyone in the martial world knows that when he wants to kill, he'll immediately attack. Yet for some reason, he still just stood there.

Only to see Gong Sun Muo Yun, Zhao Zheng Yi, and Tian Qi all surrounding Li Xun Huan. All three look very serious.

Yet they could only stand there, staring at the dagger in Li Xun Huan's hand.

Li Xun Huan didn't even bother to look at them. He simply

said, "I know all three are just itching to kill me now. By killing me, not only do you become incredibly rich and have a gorgeous woman, your name will remain famous for years to come."

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "Money and women are not important. We're only killing you for justice in the martial world."

Li Xun Huan laughed loudly. "How righteous! How honorable! You really do live up to your nickname, venerable Zhao."

He touched the tip of his dagger lightly, then said, "So why don't you come capture me?"

Zhao Zheng Yi stared intently at the dagger while remain quiet.

Li Xun Huan continued, "Oh. I know. Tian Qi's staff is without equal in the world. Mr. Zhao must be waiting for must be waiting for Tian Qi to go first. So how come Mr. Tian Qi is just standing there?"

Both of Tian Qi's hands remained behind him, as if he didn't hear a single word.

Li Xun Huan said, "Is Mr. Tian Qi waiting for Mr. Gong Sun to go first? That's a good idea. Mr. Gong Sun's 14 Cloud Fist has thousands of variations. Obviously, he should go first."

Gong Sun Muo Yun also seemed to have turned deaf, not making a move.

Li Xun Huan laughed loudly into the air and said, "This is strange. All three wants to kill me. Yet none would make a move. I wonder why?"

Those three people really are patient. No matter how Li Xun Huan ridicule them, they still just stood there motionless.

Obviously, all three wanted to kill Li Xun Huan immediately. Yet Little Li's Flying Dagger never misses. As long as he has the dagger, who would dare move?"

Long Xiao4 Yun suddenly smiled. "Brother, can't you see they're just kidding? Come, let's go drink some wine."

He walked up to Li Xun Huan with a big smile. Then pulled on his wrist.

Li Xun Huan instantly became shocked, said with a trembled voice, "Big brother you..."

He wanted to escape from Long Xiao4 Yun's grab, but it's too late.

At this moment, only to hear a faint sound, Tian Qi's hands came out from his back, a short golden staff appeared, hitting Li Xun Huan directly on the leg.

Li Xun Huan's fist, even without his dagger, is among the best in the world. Yet because he was grabbed by Long Xiao Yun, he could not do anything.

After he dropped to his knees, Gong Sun Muo Yun immediately sealed seven pressure points on his back. Zhao Zheng Yi then followed with a kick, and Li Xun Huan fell back a few feet.

Long Xiao4 Yun jumped up and yelled, "How could you do this to him? Release him."

Zhao Zheng Yi said coldly, "We can't risk such a thing."

Tian Qi said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Long."

Gong Sun Muo Yun had already blocked Long Xiao4 Yun's path. Long Xiao4 Yun tried to attack, but Tian Qi's staff immediately paralyzed his legs.

Before he can do anything else, Zhao Zheng Yi sealed his pressure point.

As Long Xiao4 Yun dropped to the floor, he said. "Brother Zhao. How could you..."

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "Although we're brothers, justice in the martial world comes before friendship. Hopefully you'll understand this, so you won't get dragged down by rotten people like him."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "But he can't be the Plum Flower Bandit!"

Gong Sun Muo Yun said, "Fourth Master, you have a good home and a good reputation. People like him aren't worth your sympathy."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "If you release him, I'll hold myself accountable for everything."

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "What about your wife then? Your son? You would see them get dragged down with you?"

Long Xiao4 Yun's whole body shivered.

Li Xun Huan's dagger is still in his hand, but he'll never have a chance to use it!

Would this true man, real hero, meet such a cruel ending like this?

Long Xiao⁴ Yun could not help but shed tears. He said, "Brother, it's all because of me. I hurt you. Your big brother failed you."

The hours before dawn are usually the darkest. Even all the light in the hall could mask the infinite darkness.

A group of people gathered outside the hall, chattering amongst themselves.

"Tian Qi really is awesome. Did you see how fast his staff was? Even if Fourth Master Long weren't there, I bet Li Xun Huan still could not block it."

"Besides, he had Mr. Zhao and Mr. Gong Sun by him."

"You're right. No wonder people say that the Venerable Zhao's feet are worth twenty thousand taels of gold. His kick was stunning."

"Yet what about Mr. Gong Sun's fist? If he didn't attack so quickly, I bet Li Xun Huan would not falter so quickly."

"Mr. Tian, Mr. Zhao, Mr. Gong Sun. Humph, Li Xun Huan really is unlucky to have met these three."

"Although that's all true, but if it weren't for Fourth Master Long..."

"What about Fourth Master Long? Could he be more of a friend to Li Xun Huan?"

“Fourth Master Long really is a true friend. Li Xun Huan is incredibly lucky to have such a brother!”

Long Xiao4 Yun sat on a red wood chair in the hall. The last words seemed to have stuck in him like needles. His face full of sweat.

Only to see Li Xun Huan lying there on the floor, coughing endlessly again.

Long Xiao4 Yun shed a tear. “Brother. It’s all my fault. It’s your bad luck that you’d meet a friend like me. I... I ruined your life.”

Li Xun Huan did all he can to stop his cough. He forced a smile and said, “Big brother. I just want you to know one thing. If I were to live my life again, I’d still be your best friend.”

Long Xiao Yun started to cry. “But... if I weren’t holding your hand, how could you... you...”

Li Xun Huan said sincerely, “I know whatever you do, it’s for my benefit. I can only thank you.”

Long Xiao4 Yun said, “Why don’t you just tell them that you’re not the Plum Flower Bandit? Why do you..”

Li Xun Huan smiled. “Life and death are trivial stuffs. I’ve already lived a full life. Why do I care so much about dying? Why bother to bow down in front of these filthy, annoying people.”

Tian Qi was listening in on the whole conversation. He looked at them and clapped. “Very nice. Very nice!”

Gong Sun Muo Yun laughed coldly. "He knows that we would not let him go no matter what, so he can only ridicule us, making himself feel better before death."

Li Xun Huan said calmly, "You're right. At this point, I can only ask for death. Yet now that I no longer have my dagger, why do you still not kill me?"

Gong Sun Muo Yun's wrinkled face suddenly turned red.

Zhao Zheng Yi said loudly, "If we were to kill you now, words might spread around the martial world that we only wanted to kill you for our selfish needs. We need to fairly execute you!"

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Zhao Zheng Yi, I really do deeply admire you. Although your heart's absolutely disgusting, all your words are bright and righteous. And you can say them with a straight face."

Tian Qi said with a laugh. "Mr. Li. You do have guts. If you really want to die so quickly, I have a plan."

Li Xun Huan said, "I originally wanted to say something to you too. But I didn't want to stain my mouth."

Tian Qi went on as if Li Xun Huan didn't say anything. "If you want to die a little quicker, just write down that you're guilty. Then we can provide you with a merciful death."

Li Xun Huan didn't even have to think. "Fine. I say it. You write it."

Long Xiao4 Yun hurriedly said, "Brother. You can do this!"

Li Xun Huan just ignored him. He kept on going. "My crimes

are too numerous to speak. I pretend to be righteous when my heart's evil. I scheme for power, break other people's friendship, sneak attack on others, use devious methods when fighting, I have no integrity and did tons of horrendous things. Yet I still feel as if I'm a true gentleman!"

Only to hear a loud sound, as Zhao Zheng Yi slapped him hard on the face!

Yet Li Xun Huan just smiled. "No matter. I'll just pretend that I got bitten by a crazy dog."

Zhao Zheng Yi said angrily, "You bastard. Listen well. Even if I can't kill you yet, I can still make you wish that you were dead!"

Li Xun Huan still just laughed. "If I were afraid of you little filthy fake gentleman, I wouldn't be a true man. Just use whatever torturing method you want!"

Zhao Zheng Yi said. "Good!"

Long Xiao4 Yun simply shivered on his seat. He said, "Brother. I'm sorry. You might be a hero, but I'm a coward. I..."

Li Xun Huan said, "This isn't your fault, big brother. If I had a son and a wife, I'd do the same thing."

At this time Zhao Zheng Yi had already grabbed hold of him, pulling his muscles hard. The pain is excruciating for anyone to endure, yet Li Xun Huan still just smiled.

At this time, someone said outside, "Ms. Lin, where did you come from? And who's this friend of yours?"

Only to see Lin Xian Er's clothing messed up, with parts torn, walking into the hall.

By her side is a youngster. Even on such a freezing day, he's just wearing a thin piece of clothing. Yet his shoulders are still straight. As if nothing in this world can make him bend!

Yet he's carrying a dead body.

Ah Fei!

Why is Ah Fei here?

Li Xun Huan's heart pounded, not knowing whether to be happy or shocked. Yet he suddenly turned away, not wanting Ah Fei to see him like this.

He doesn't want Ah Fei to do anything stupid for him.

Yet Ah Fei still saw him.

His cold face suddenly lightened up. Then marched towards Li Xun Huan. Zhao Zheng Yi did not block him, for he knows how skillful this youngster is.

But Gong Sun Muo Yun doesn't know this. He immediately blocked Ah Fei's path and said, "Who the hell are you? What do you want to do?"

Ah Fei said, "To teach you a lesson!"

When he heard this, Gong Sun Muo Yun attacked.

Lin Xian Er only looked shockingly at Li Xun Huan, not caring about anyone else. As for Long Xiao4 Yun, he doesn't

really want to do anything anymore.

Yet oddly enough, Ah Fei didn't even bother to dodge.

Only to hear a loud noise as Gong Sun Muo Yun's fist landed on Ah Fei's chest. Ah Fei didn't move an inch, yet Gong Sun Muo Yun was in such pain he bent down on his knees.

Ah Fei didn't even bother to look at him, instead walking up to Li Xun Huan and asked, "Is he your friend?"

Li Xun Huan just smiled. "Do you think I have a friend like him?"

At this time, Gong Sun Muo Yun attacked again. Suddenly, Ah Fei turned around, and with another loud thud, Gong Sun Muo Yun landed several feet away.

The crowd couldn't believe what they're seeing. No one would believe that the famous Cloud Fist would look like crap in front of this youngster.

Only Tian Qi laughed loudly. "Friend you are quite fast. The youngsters really is overtaking us old folks."

He bowed and said. "My name is Tian Qi. What's your name. Maybe we can be friends."

Ah Fei said, "I don't have a name. Nor do I care to have a friend like you."

Other people's expressions changed, yet Tian Qi kept on smiling. "Unfortunately, you're very bad at making friends."

Ah Fei said, "Really?"

Tian Qi pointed at Li Xun Huan and said, "Is he your friend?"

"Yes."

Tian Qi asked, "Do you know who he is?"

"I do."

Tian Qi chuckled, "Do you also know that he is the Plum Flower Bandit?"

Ah Fei raised his eyebrows. "Plum Flower Bandit?"

Tian Qi said, "This really is hard to believe. But one has to accept the truth."

Ah Fei stared at him, his stare penetrating his heart.

Ah Fei said coldly, "He's definitely is not the Plum Flower Bandit."

"Why?"

Ah Fei suddenly dropped the dead person on his shoulders. Then said, "Because this is the real Plum Flower Bandit!"

The crowd could not help but starting to gather around the corpse.

This corpse is thin and dry. The knife wounds on his face made it hard to tell who he is.

Tian Qi laughed again. "You're saying that this is the real Plum Flower Bandit?"

Ah Fei said, "Yes."

Tian Qi said, "You really are a youngster. Do you really think everyone's so gullible? Do you think we'll believe you just by bringing some corpse and say it's the Plum Flower Bandit?"

Ah Fei said, "I never lie. And I never get tricked."

Tian Qi said, "In that case, how can you prove it?"

Ah Fei said, "Just look at his mouth!"

Tian Qi laughed again. "Why should I look at his mouth. Can he talk or something?"

Everyone else also laughed along. Even if they didn't think it was very funny, they still laughed along because Tian Qi did.

Lin Xian Er suddenly came and said, "I know he's not lying. This person really is the Plum Flower Bandit."

Tian Qi said, "Really? Did the corpse tell you?"

Lin Xian Er said, "That's right. He told me himself."

She didn't let anyone interrupt her before continuing. "When Qin Zhong died, I can see he died from a very powerful hidden weapon. It's not too big a deal that he couldn't dodge this weapon. Yet there's something fishy if even a master like Wu Wen Tian couldn't dodge this hidden weapon. Now I know why."

Tian Qi's eyes twitched. "Oh? So why?"

Lin Xian Er said, "Yes. The secret is in his mouth."

She suddenly used a knife to open the corpse's mouth. There's a little barrow inside.

Lin Xian Er said, "It's only because the weapons came out when he was talking, that no one would guard against such an attack!"

Tian Qi said, "If he has this barrel in his mouth, how can he talk?"

Lin Xian Er said, "This is the secret within the secret. He doesn't need his mouth to talk. Because he can do so with his stomach. His mouth is for killing people!"

While what she said sound ludicrous, knowledgeable people like Tian Qi knows that such an ability does exist. Supposedly, it came from Persia, and was mainly used as circus tricks. Normally it sounds very weird. Yet if used by a true martial arts expert, the sound can obviously be much more realistic.

Lin Xian Er said, "Before Mr. Tian and others fight, where do you look at?"

Tian Qi said, "Obviously at the opponent's body."

Lin Xian Er asked, "What part of the body?"

Tian Qi responded, "Shoulders and hands."

Lin Xian Er smiled. "See. That's my point. When experts fight, they never look at the opponent's mouth. Only when dogs fight do they worry about the opponent's mouth. Since people aren't like dogs, they never bite.

Everyone else chuckled. When a beauty such as Lin Xian Er say something like this, how could one not laugh along?

Yet Lin Xian Er immediately looked sullen, then said, "Yet the Plum Flower Bandit just happen to use his mouth as his weapon. The better the fighter, the easier it is to get tricked. Because a high level martial arts expert would never notice the opponent's mouth.

Tian Qi asked, "So how did you find out about this secret?"

Lin Xian Er said, "I only found out after he used the hidden weapons."

Tian Qi chuckled. "So is our little friend a dog? He only likes to stare at other people's mouths?"

Chapter 14: Some Things Can't Be Explained

Lin Xian Er said, "So the Mr. Tian still can't see that he's wearing the Golden Thread Vest?"

Tian Qi's eyes brightened. "So that's why when brother Muo Yun hit him, he hurt his hand."

Lin Xian Er said, "I didn't plan on going back to my room today. But at night, I suddenly remembered that I left something important there. Just as I got back, the Plum Flower Bandit appeared."

Her beautiful face revealed much fear as she continued, "At that time, I hadn't seen him yet. I just felt someone behind me. When I turned around, he had already sealed my pressure point."

Tian Qi said, "If that's the case, then this person's lightness kung fu must be fairly good."

Lin Xian Er sighed. "His movement is like that of a ghost. I didn't even realize what was going on before he grabbed me. At that time, I thought he must be the Plum Flower Bandit. So I asked, "What do you want? Why don't you just kill me?"

"What did he say?"

Lin Xian Er bit her teeth, then said, "He didn't say anything, just laughed sinisterly."

Tian Qi's eyes brightened. "So he didn't say that he's the Plum Flower Bandit."

Lin Xian Er said, "He didn't have to tell me. At that moment, I just wanted to die, but unfortunately, I had no strength. Then suddenly, a shadow appeared before us."

Tian Qi said, "I bet that person must be our little friend here."

Lin Xian Er replied. "Yes. It was him."

She looked at Ah Fei a moment. Her eyes filled with gratitude. "He came so quickly even the Plum Flower Bandit was surprised, who immediately put me down on the ground. Then I heard him ask, "Are you the Plum Flower Bandit?" The Plum Flower Bandit said, "What if I am? What if I'm not? You're about to die real soon either way."

Before he finished, needles shot out of his mouth. I was both shocked and terrified. When I saw those needles landed on that gentleman's chest, I thought he was dead. Yet for some reason, he wasn't even hurt."

After that, I just saw a flash of a sword, and the Plum Flower Bandit fell to the ground. His speed was such that I can't even begin to describe.

When she spoke to this point, everyone stared at that sword on Ah Fei's waist. No one thought this sword can kill anyone, much less the Plum Flower Bandit!

Tian Qi also stared intently at this sword.

He then smiled. "Looks like you must've already been waiting there?"

Ah Fei said, "Correct."

Tian Qi said, "So when you saw them, you immediately went over and asked if he was the Plum Flower Bandit?"

"Correct."

Tian Qi smiled. "So do you always hide in the dark, asking every stranger that passes by if he's the Plum Flower Bandit?"

Ah Fei said, "I don't have that much spare time."

Tian Qi asked, "So when you do have that much spare time, what do you ask strangers on a street?"

Ah Fei said, "Why would I ask them anything? What do they have to do with me?"

Tian Qi said with a smile. "See. If you were to ask, you'd say, 'Who are you?' For example, a while back you only asked who Mr. Gong Sun was. You didn't ask if he was the Plum Flower Bandit."

Ah Fei replied. "I know he's not the Plum Flower Bandit. Why would I bother asking him?"

Tian Qi started to look serious. He pointed at the corpse and asked, "In that case, why did you ask that person? Could it be that you already know that he's the Plum Flower Bandit?"

If you already knew, why bother even asking?”

“Only because someone told me that the Plum Flower Bandit would appear these few days.”

Tian Qi stared intently at Li Xun Huan. “But who told you? Was it the Plum Flower Bandit himself? Or his friends?”

It’s as if he knew Ah Fei would not respond to this question. Actually, just by asking this question, his goal has been reached. He needed no response.

When everyone else heard this, they also can’t help but stare at Li Xun Huan. They all immediately figured that this was all a scheme made by Li Xun Huan and Ah Fei.

Tian Qi immediately walked up in front of a youngster and asked loudly, “Are you the Plum Flower Bandit?”

That youngster became terrified, barely able to speak. “How... how could I be...”

Before he finished, Tian Qi sealed his pressure point. Then he turned around and said, “Hey! I’ve captured another Plum Flower Bandit.”

He continued, “I’m sure everyone would agree it’s not that easy to capture the Plum Flower Bandit, right?”

The crowd burst into laughter. They all started to ask each other jokingly, “Are you the Plum Flower Bandit?”

“Actually, you look more like the Plum Flower Bandit.”

“How come there are more and more Plum Flower Bandit?”

Li Xun Huan suddenly sighed. He said, "Brother. You should just go."

Ah Fei looked agitated. "Go?"

Li Xun Huan smiled. "With the world-famous venerable Zhao and Seventh Master Tian here, how could an unknown youngster kill the Plum Flower Bandit? No matter what you say, it's useless."

Ah Fei squeezed his sword. He said coldly, "I also don't want to talk to these people. But my sword..."

Li Xun Huan said, "Even if you kill all of them, still no one would believe that you've killed the Plum Flower Bandit. Can't you understand this logic?"

Ah Fei's bright eyes dimmed. "You're right. I finally understand. I finally understand..."

Li Xun Huan chuckled. "If you want to be famous, then you better understand this logic. Otherwise, sooner or later, you'd end up like me, becoming the Plum Flower Bandit."

Ah Fei said, "You point is, if I want to be famous, then I better know how to follow orders, right?"

Li Xun Huan said, "You're right on the money. If you'll simply let these 'heroes' get all the credit, they'll proclaim you a youngster with a great future. Then after you wait ten or twenty years, when these heroes all die, you'll become famous."

Ah Fei just stood there for a while, then suddenly smiled.

He said with a smile. "Looks like I'll never become famous."

Li Xun Huan said, "That may not be a bad thing."

When he saw Ah Fei smile, Li Xun Huan's smile became much more natural. Their smiles are like a discussing the most interesting story in the world.

Everyone looked at these two people, not knowing what their problem is. Suddenly, Ah Fei flew to Li Xun Huan's side. He grabbed Li Xun Huan's hand and said. "Fame is no big deal. But since we met today, we really should at least have a drink."

Li Xun Huan said, "Normally, I would never turn down wine. But today..."

Tian Qi said, "Today, unfortunately, he can't make it."

Ah Fei became serious and spoke coldly, "Says who!"

Tian Qi waved his hand. Two muscular man came in. One said, "Seventh Master Tian said so. His words must be obeyed!"

The other one said, "Whoever disobeys his orders must die!"

Although these people look like servants, the speed in which they came in showed that they have excellent kung fu.

While they spoke, two steel saber turned into two flying rainbow. Carrying a powerful wind, the saber came. One left one right. One up one down. Cutting like lightning at Ah Fei's shoulders.

Ah Fei just stared at them coldly while they made their attack, and looked like he didn't even move. Suddenly, there

was a flash. And then another flash. Then came two loud screams. Two sabers went up into midair. Then both man's left hand grabbed their right hand. Their expressions filled with pain. Blood poured out of their palms.

Yet Ah Fei's sword is still on his waist. No one saw how he pulled out the sword. But everyone saw that the sword now has blood stains.

What an incredibly fast sword!

Tian Qi's smile also disappeared.

Ah Fei said calmly. "Seventh Master Tian's words are orders. Unfortunately, my sword doesn't listen to orders. It only kills people."

The two man showed incredibly looks of shock on their faces. They retreated a few steps before rushing back out the door. Swords might not be able to give orders, but sometimes, they're more effective than anyone's orders. Ah Fei grabbed Li Xun Huan's hand. "Let's go. Let's go drink some wine. I won't believe that there are still people who'd dare block us.

Before Li Xun Huan can speak, Long Xiao4 Yun asked, "If you want him to leave, why don't you unseal his pressure point?"

Ah Fei's mouth twitched. At this moment, Li Xun Huan's heart pounded. He suddenly remembered the events that day...

That day, Ah Fei captured Hong Han Min and left him for Li Xun Huan.

That day, Li Xun Huan thought it was weird. Why didn't Ah

Fei just seal his pressure point? Now he realized everything!

This youngster's sword might be without equal, but he doesn't know about pressure point sealing!

Li Xun Huan's heart dropped. But his expression remain unchanged. With a smile, he said, "Today I don't have the money to invite you!"

Ah Fei thought for a moment, then said one word at a time. "I'll invite you."

Li Xun Huan said, "I will never drink wine not bought with my own money."

Ah Fei stared at him. His cold face suddenly showed a hint of sadness.

He also knows that Li Xun Huan doesn't want him to get in any danger.

Because if he can't unseal Li Xun Huan's pressure point, he can only carry Li Xun Huan out. If he carried Li Xun Huan out, then they might not make it.

Tian Qi's eyes lit up again. He looked at their expressions, then said with a smile. "Li Xun Huan really is a true man. You'll never drag others down with you. Little friend. You should go now."

Li Xun Huan knows that this old fox saw Ah Fei's weakness. He immediately said, "You really don't have to lure him. He's not going to fall for it. Besides, even carrying me, you people might not be able to defeat him."

He continued. "Besides, you know that I won't go with him. If

I were to go with him today, then I'll never have any chance to clear my name."

These words are obviously for Ah Fei.

Ah Fei stood there for a while, then said, "If they say you're the Plum Flower Bandit, then you must be the Plum Flower Bandit, right?"

Li Xun Huan laughed. "Some people's words are no different from a loud fart."

Ah Fei said, "Then why do you care if they're just farting?"

He suddenly turned and picked up Li Xun Huan, carrying him on his back. At this moment, Tian Qi moved. Only to see the shadow of the staff, shooting at the eleven big pressure points of Ah Fei's chest. If his staff even touch Ah Fei's body slightly, then Ah Fei would never have another chance of moving!

Ah Fei did not pull out his sword!

He's just like Li Xun Huan. If he pulls out his sword, then it must draw blood.

Yet at this moment, he is not absolutely certain that he can injure Tian Qi.

Everyone looked at the shadow of Tian Qi's staff. Tian Qi's staff pressure sealing ability is one of the best in the martial world, yet he can't seem to control this youngster.

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "Killing the Plum Flower Bandit is of the highest honor. Why would anyone miss this chance?"

Before he finished, seven people drew their weapons. All aiming towards Li Xun Huan. Lin Xian Er hurried towards Long Xiao4 Yun and said, "Fourth brother. Why don't you stop them?"

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "You mean you can't see that my pressure point has been sealed?"

At this moment they heard a loud noise. Three people fell to the ground.

Ah Fei finally drew his sword!

He might not be able to hurt Tian Qi, but if others want to die, he can only kill them. The blood came out of the brightness of the sword. Li Xun Huan's coat now filled with blood.

Every single weapon disappeared. All except for Tian Qi's short staff, which like a snake still attacks endlessly at Ah Fei's pressure points.

Lin Xian Er suddenly sighed and said, "Venerable Zhao really is a true gentleman. He would not win with numbers!"

Zhao Zheng Yi's eyes suddenly lit up. Then said, "But against the likes of Plum Flower Bandit, it's useless to obey Martial world rules!"

He grabbed a long spear by his side. Then attacked directly at Li Xun Huan back.

It seems that his reputation isn't totally baseless. Zhao Zheng Yi's move is quite impressive.

As both the staff and the spear are longer than Ah Fei's short sword, he's already at a huge disadvantage. Not to mention there's a person on his back.

Tian Qi originally wanted to use his advantage in weapon length to beat this youngster. Yet he always misses at the last moment, for some reason.

After many rounds, he suddenly found that this youngster had not attacked even once. But his steps are amazing. Just as he was about to seal Ah Fei's pressure point, Ah Fei seems to mysteriously escape.

Tian Qi is quite knowledgeable in martial arts. Yet he just can't figure out where this youngster's steps come from.

Suddenly, he thought of an idea. Tian Qi smiled. "Little friend. Why don't you just put him down. Otherwise, before he can drag you down, you'd have dragged him down."

Ah Fei bit his teeth. "If you want me to put him down, then why are you still attacking me?"

Tian Qi immediately withdrew his staff, then retreated a few steps. Zhao Zheng Yi's spear also stopped midway and turned around.

Ah Fei didn't even bother to look at them as he put Li Xun Huan down on a chair. Li Xun Huan's face is all red. Yet he still did his best to control himself, forcing himself not to cough. He's afraid that his cough would affect Ah Fei's concentration.

Ah Fei looked at Li Xun Huan. Then he turned around, looking at Zhao Zheng Yi and said, "I only regret one thing. Last time, why didn't I kill you!"

While he spoke, his sword came out.

This sword's speed is beyond description. How could Zhao Zheng Yi possibly dodge it? Just as he's about to spill blood, someone outside said, "Praise be to Buddha." As he spoke, a shadow from the outside came in. By the time he said the second word, that shadow is already behind Ah Fei. Ah Fei originally was about to strike, but he suddenly turned his sword the opposite way, striking that shadow.

After a loud sound, the sword struck the shadow, which turned out to be Monk's beads.

The sword still vibrates, but Ah Fei remains motionless.

It's dawn now.

In the morning sunlight, six monks in grey clothes came into the all. The first with white eyebrows, but his face still looks sharp. His eyes shine bright.

He opened his hands. And those beads returned to his hands.

After getting over the shock, Zhao Zheng Yi gathered himself. Then bowed in front of this white-brow monk. "I didn't know reverend you are coming. I'm sorry I wasn't able to greet you outside."

The white-brow monk just smiled. His eyes focused on Ah Fei's face. Then said, "Your sword is quite fast."

Ah Fei said, "If my sword wasn't fast, I'm afraid that you'd arrive just in time to help me find the directions to the underworld."

The white-brow monk said, "I simply did not want to see more deaths. That's why I made my move. Although your sword is fast, but it's still not as fast as the Buddha's eyes."

Ah Fei said, "But are your beads also faster than Buddha's eyes? If I were to die from your beads, then wouldn't there also be another death?"

Zhao Zheng Yi said, "How dare you speak to a Reverend Shaolin elder like that?"

The white-brow monk just smiled. "No matter. This youngster's mouth is quite a sharp sword."

Lin Xian Er suddenly said with a smile. "Since Reverend Xin Mei let you go, hurry and leave now."

Zhao Zheng Yi said coldly, "I'm afraid he no longer has the chance to leave!"

Ah Fei said, "Really? Do you think you can block my path?"

While he spoke, he had already walked out the door.

Zhao Zheng Yi's expression changed. He said, "Reverend..."

Tian Qi hurried up and responded, "Elder Xin Mei is very forgiving. He's just a youngster. Let him go."

Xin Mei then said seriously. "I came after receiving a letter from the head of Shaolin, saying that a Shaolin disciple Qin Zhong is gravely injured. So I can as soon as I could.

Zhao Zheng Yi sighed. Then stared at Li Xun Huan. "Unfortunately, Reverend came a bit too late."

It's quite bright now outside. People are beginning to wonder around the streets. Ah Fei just walked on the snow. Although his steps are light, his heart is heavy.

Then he heard a voice. "Wait up! Wait up!"

This voice is crisp and beautiful. Ah Fei didn't have to look back to know who's behind him.

This is because everyone has now stopped walking and talking, instead just staring like idiots at someone behind him.

Ah Fei did not turn around. He just kept on walking.

But then he smelled a sweet fragrance from behind his back. The fragrance extremely enchanting. He could not help but turn back.

Lin Xian Er is just as beautiful and alluring as ever.

Ah Fei's eyes are still as cold as the snow.

Lin Xian Er lowered her head, her face all red. "I came to apologize. I..."

Ah Fei said, "You have nothing to apologize for."

Lin Xian Er bit her teeth a bit. "But those people are so wrong. And so impolite."

Ah Fei said, "That has nothing to do with you."

Lin Xian Er said, "But you saved me. How could I..."

Ah Fei said, "I saved you. I didn't save them. I didn't save you for you to apologize for them."

He then asked, "What else do you want to say?"

Lin Xian Er became speechless. She has never met anyone quite like this. She had always thought that even frozen mountains would melt in front of her.

Ah Fei said. "Goodbye."

He turned around and began to walk again. But after a few steps, Lin Xian Er suddenly yelled, "Hold on a minute. I have more things to tell you."

Ah Fei said, "There's no need."

Lin Xian Er then said, "But... what if something happens to Li Xun Huan? Who would I tell?"

Ah Fei turned around and said, "Do you know of the Shen's little inn on the west side?"

Lin Xian Er said, "Don't forget. I've been living in this town for six years."

"That's where I'll be. Before nightfall, I won't leave."

Lin Xian Er asked, "And when night comes?"

Ah Fei looked at the sky for a long time. Then said, "Don't forget. Li Xun Huan's my friend. I don't have many friends. As for a friend like Li Xun Huan, it's impossible to find another one like him. So if he were to die, this world would become incredibly uninteresting."

Lin Xian Er sighed. "I knew you're still planning on rescuing him. But do you realize that no matter how good a friend is, he's still not worth as much as your own life."

Ah Fei looked down at Lin Xian Er, staring at her intently in the eyes. Then he said slowly and clearly, "I sincerely hope you never ever say this sort of thing again. This time, I'll just pretend that I didn't hear you!"

Chapter 15: True Love

After snowing for so many days, sunlight finally reappeared today.

Yet sunlight did not reach this particular room. Li Xun Huan did not despair. He knows that many places on Earth never see the sunlight.

Besides, he's already very familiar with despair.

He's not sure exactly what Tian, Zhao, and the others will do to him. He's too lazy to think of such things. Right now, Tian Qi is taking the Shaolin monks to see Qin Xiao Yi and his son. They simply threw him into this storage room. However, Long Xiao4 Yun didn't say a thing.

Li Xun Huan doesn't blame Long Xiao4 Yun.

Long Xiao4 Yun has his reasons. Besides, he can't do anything anyway.

Now, Li Xun Huan can only hope Ah Fei would not come back and try to save him. He knows that although Ah Fei's sword is fast, his martial arts has many holes. If he meets up with the likes of Tian Qi and Reverend Xin Mei, and his sword doesn't draw blood with the first strike, then his sword would probably never draw blood again!

In just three more years, Ah Fei would be able to cover his

weaknesses. At that time, he would be invincible.

So he must live for another three years.

The floor is very wet. Li Xun Huan coughed again. He only wish that he could drink some wine.

Yet now, even this wish is beyond his reach. If someone else was in this position, that person would probably cry.

But Li Xun Huan laughed instead. He thought that some of the things in this world are quite funny.

This used to be his house. Everything here used to be his. Yet now everyone thinks he's a thief, locking him in this little room like a dog. Who would've thought?

The door suddenly opened.

Perhaps Zhao Zheng Yi can't even wait this short a while, and decided to kill him now?

Yet Li Xun Huan immediately found out that it's not Zhao Zheng Yi. He smelled excellent wine. And saw a hand holding the wine bottle.

This hand is quite small, covering the wrist is a bright red sleeve.

Li Xun Huan said, "Xiao3 Yun, Is that you?"

The red child came in giggling. He held the bottle with both hands and smelled the wine. Then said with a bright smile, "I know you really want a drink, right?"

Li Xun Huan also smiled. "Since you know that I really want wine, you brought me some, right?"

The red child nodded. He poured some wine into a cup, then put it in front of Li Xun Huan's face. Just as Li Xun Huan opened this mouth, the red child withdrew his hand. He then spoke with a smile, "You have to guess what kind of wine this is before I let you drink it."

Li Xun Huan closed his eyes. He took a deep breath, then said. "This is an old Zhu Ye Qing. It's my favorite wine. If I can't even smell this type of wine, then I truly deserve to die."

The red child smiled. "No wonder people all say Little Li Tan Hua is an expert on women and wine. But if you really want to drink this wine, then you better answer a question."

"What's the question?"

The bright smile from the red child's face disappeared quickly.

He stared at Li Xun Huan and asked, "What exactly is your relationship with my mother? Does she like you a lot?"

Li Xun Huan's face also changed. He just said, "Is this really something you should ask?"

The red child answered, "Why can't a child ask about his mother?"

Li Xun Huan said in an angry tone. "You should realize that your mother loves your father wholeheartedly. How could you think otherwise?"

The red child laughed coldly. "Do you think you can hide this from me? Stop dreaming."

He bit his teeth. "When mother heard what happened to you, she just closed the door and cried secretly in her room. Even when I almost died, she didn't cry like this. I'm asking you now. Why?"

Li Xun Huan's heart dropped. It's as if he just became a pile of mud, being stepped on by passing people. After a long time, he finally regained his composure. "I'll tell you this right now. You can question anyone. But never your mother. That's because she has nothing to hide. Now you can take your wine and go."

The red child stared at him. "This wine is for you. How could I take it back?"

He suddenly poured the whole cup on Li Xun Huan's face.

Li Xun Huan didn't move. He didn't even look at the red child's face. Instead he just said, "You're just a kid. I don't blame you."

The red child laughed coldly. "Even if I weren't a kid, what can you do to me?"

He suddenly pulled out a dagger, which he waved in front of Li Xun Huan's face. "Do you see this dagger clearly? This is your dagger. She said that if I have this dagger, you'll protect me. But can you protect me now? You can't even protect yourself."

Li Xun Huan sighed. "You're right. Dagger is for killing anyway, not for protection."

The red child's face turned all white. He said venomously, "You crippled me. Now I want you to experience the same pain. You..."

Suddenly someone yelled outside. "Xiao3 Yun? Is that you inside?"

This voice is warm and enchanting. Yet when Li Xun Huan and the red child heard this, their faces immediately changed. The red child immediately hid the dagger, his face regaining that innocent smile. "Mom. I'm in here. I brought some wine for Uncle Li. But when mom you yelled, it scared me. Look, you got me to spill all this wine on Uncle Li's face."

As he spoke, Lin Shi Yin arrived at the door. Her beautiful eyes now all red, filled with sadness.

Yet when she saw the red child, she immediately regained her warmth. "Your Uncle Li doesn't want to drink wine right now. You should be resting in bed right now. Come on."

The red child said, "Uncle Li isn't really guilty, is he? How come we won't try to save him?"

Lin Shi Yin said softly, "A child should not say such things. Go to sleep."

The red child turned and looked at Li Xun Huan. "Uncle Li. I need to go now. Tomorrow I'll bring more wine for you."

As Li Xun Huan looked at that child's innocent smile, cold sweat poured down his face.

Then he heard Lin Shi Yin sigh. "I was originally afraid that he might try to hurt you. But now... now I don't worry anymore. Although he has made some mistakes, he's still a

good boy.”

Li Xun Huan could only smile along.

Lin Shi Yin didn't look at him. After a long time, she said, “You used to at least keep your promises. Why did you change?”

Li Xun Huan felt as if his throat had been stuffed, preventing him from saying anything.

“You promised me not to see Lin Xian Er. Yet they found you in Lin Xian Er's room.”

Li Xun Huan laughed. He doesn't even know himself why he laughed, but he did laugh. Looking at his own feet, he said, “I remember that this shack was built only about fifteen or so years ago.”

“Yes.”

“Yet now this room is already old. The window is broken. There's a hole on the roof. This shows that ten years is indeed a long time. If a room can changed, how come people can't?”

Lin Shi Yin squeezed her own hand, then asked, “Since... since when did you became a liar?”

Li Xun Huan said, “I've always been a liar. It's just that I'm much more experienced now.”

Li Xun Huan still kept smiling. His goal has been reached.

He wanted to hurt her. Hurt her so she'll leave. He can't drag down others with him. So he must be heartless to hurt those

he loves.

Because these are the people he cares for the most.

Hurting them is like hurting himself. Although he smile on the surface, his heart is already broken.

He closed his eyes so tears won't come out. By the time he opened them again, he found that Lin Shi Yin is still right in front of him, staring into his eyes.

"Why..why are you still here?"

Lin Shi Yin said, "I just want to make sure. Are you... are you really the Plum Flower Bandit?"

Li Xun Huan burst into laughter. "Am I the Plum Flower Bandit? You ask if I'm the Plum Flower Bandit..."

Lin Shi Yin said, "Although I don't believe it, I still want you to tell me yourself."

Li Xun Huan kept on laughing. "If you don't believe so, why do you ask? If I'm a liar, then why bother asking me? If I can lie to you once, I can lie to you a hundred times! A thousand times!"

Lin Shi Yin's face became more and more pale. Her whole body shaking.

After a long time, she said, "I'll let you go. I don't care if you're the Plum Flower Bandit. I'll still let you go. I only hope that you'll never come back this time!"

Li Xun Huan said loudly, "Stop! How can you do this? Do you think I'll run away like a dog? What kind of a person do you

think I am?"

Lin Shi Yin ignored him, and instead went over to unseal his pressure point.

At this moment, someone said, "Shi Yin. What do you think you're doing?"

This is Long Xiao4 Yun's voice.

Lin Shi Yin turned around and stared at Long Xiao4 Yun. She spoke one word at a time. "You don't know what I'm trying to do?"

Long Xiao4 Yun's face changed. "But..."

Lin Shi Yin said, "But what? You're suppose to be the one to do this! Did you forget all the things he did for us? Did you forget the past? Are you going to watch him die like this?"

Long Xiao Yun squeezed his own hands. Then he started to hit his own chest. "I don't have the courage. I'm afraid. I'm a coward. But why don't you think a minute. How can we do this? If we let him go, do you think they'd let us go?"

Lin Shi Yin looked at him, as if looking at a stranger. She took a few steps backward. "You've changed. You've also changed... You weren't like this before!"

Long Xiao Yun sighed. "You're right. I've changed. Because I now have a wife, a son. No matter what I do, I have to think of them first."

Before he finished, she cried. Nothing in this world can move a mother more than her child.

Long Xiao4 Yun kneeled in front of Li Xun Huan, his face full of tears. "Brother. I've failed you. I can only seek forgiveness."

Li Xun Huan said, "Forgive you? I don't know what you're talking about. I've said it before. None of this is your fault. If I wanted to leave, I could've done so already. I wouldn't need you to save me."

He was still staring at his own feet, because he really couldn't bear to look at them. He was afraid he would not be able to control his tears.

Long XiaoYun said: "Brother, I know well of your hardships, but I can guarantee that they would not kill you. You only need to see Sum Wu Dai Tze and then you'll be fine."

Li XunHuan wrinkled his brows: "Sum Wu Dai Tze? Could it be that they are planning to send me to Shaolin?"

Long XiaoYun said: "That's right. Cheun Zhung Suer was Sum Wu Dai Tze's beloved disciple. Sum Wu Dai Tze would also not carelessly accuse an innocent man. Besides, senior Bak Heal Seng is at Shaolin right now, he will definitely help you find justice."

Li XunHuan did not say a word. Because he had just spotted Tian Qi.

Tian Qi was staring at him, snickering.

In that brief moment when Tian Qi appeared, Lin ShiYin restored her composure, nodded slightly towards him, and slowly walked out.

The evening wind cuts to the bone. She took two steps, and suddenly said: "Yun Yue, come on out.".

The red child slipped out from behind the building and smiled: "Mom, I couldn't sleep, so.....therefore.....".

Lin ShiYin said: "Therefore you led them here. Am I right?".

The red child laughed and rushed over. He suddenly saw the gloomy complexion on his mother's face, and stopped running, bowing his head.

Lin ShiYin watched him quietly. This was her precious child, her flesh and blood. A few teardrops fell from her eyes.

After a long time, she let out a sad sigh, raised her face towards the heavens, and said: "Why is it that hatred is so much more harder to forget than kindness....."

Tie Chuanjia clenched his fists and paced back and forth within the temple grounds. After who knows how long, the fire went out but nobody went to replenish the firewood.

A Fei just sat there quietly, not moving.

Tie Chuanjia said angrily: I'd already guessed that even if you killed the Plum Flower Bandit, those "dai haps" wouldn't go along with it. If a pack of wild dogs saw a fat piece of meat, how can they be willing to give it up?

A Fei: You did advise me, but I still went, because I had to!

Tie Chuanjia sighed: Luckily you went, otherwise you might not have recognized these "dai haps" true faces.

He suddenly turned around and stared at A Fei: You really

didn't get to see my Master?

A Fei: No.

Tie Chuanjia watched the extinguished bonfire and started to space out, mumbling to himself: I wonder how he's doing...

A Fei: He never wished for others to worry about him.

Tie Chuanjia laughed loosely: That's right. Even though those "dai haps" view him as a thorn in the side, a nail in the eyes [OUCH!], not a single one of them would dare to move one of his fingers.

A Fei: Mmm.

Tie Chuanjia looked outside the doorway: The sky is light, I need to depart.

A Fei: Fine.

Tie Chuanjia: If you happen to see my Master, say - "If Tie Chuanjia is able to solve his own problems, he will definitely return to look for him.".

A Fei: Fine.

Tie Chuanjia looked at his thin face, grasped his fist and said: Farewell.

Although there was a caring sentiment in his eyes, he turned his head, and walked out without glancing back.

A Fei still didn't move, but within his pair of strong, shining pupils, there suddenly appeared to be a bit of moisture.

A Fei shut his eyes, as if to go to sleep, but a teardrop escaped from the corner of his eye, like a cold dew drop in a field.

He did not tell Tie ChuanJia of his encounter with Li XunHuan, because he didn't want to watch Tie ChuanJia go stake his life for Li XunHuan, he will go stake his own life for Li XunHuan!

What is the price of one life when it comes to friendship?

After a period of time, the morning sun casted a person's shadow across the area, the long dark shadow advanced to cover A Fei's face.

A Fei did not open his eyes, he only asked: It's you? Do you have any news?

This youth's intuition was better than a wild animal's. The one who came in was Lin XianEr: It's good news.

Good news?

A Fei was hard pressed to believe that there was still good news in this world.

Lin XianEr: Although he is still not free at the moment, at least he will not be in any danger.

A Fei: Oh?

Lin XianEr: Because Tian Qi and those guys can only go along with Reverend XinMei's proposal to send him off to Shaolin. Shaolin's Abbot XinHu has always been fair. And I

also hear that Bai XiaoSheng is there. If these two men can't clear his name, then no one can.

A Fei: Who is Bai XiaoSheng?

Lin XianEr giggled: This person is the world's number one knowledgeable person, there is nothing he doesn't know. It is also said that only he can determine whether a Plum Flower Bandit is the real deal or not.

A Fei was silent for a moment. Then he suddenly opened his eyes and stared at Lin XianEr: Do you know which is the most despicable type of person in this world?

Lin XianEr smiled: Would it be like Zhao ZhengYi, that type of Fake Gentleman?

A Fei: A Fake Gentleman is worth hating, but a know-it-all is the most despicable.

Lin XianEr: A know-it-all? Are you referring to Bai XiaoSheng?

A Fei: That's right. This type of person thinks highly of himself. He thinks of himself as very intelligent, that there's nothing he does not know. On his one word alone, he can seal another man's fate, but how much can he truly know?

Lin XianEr: But everyone says...

A Fei laughed coldly: It is only because everyone says there is nothing he doesn't know that, in the end, he winds up fooling himself, and believes that there is nothing he doesn't know.

A Fei continued: I'd rather put my trust in someone who

doesn't know a thing.

If a person wants others to have a good impression of him, the best method is to first let others know that he likes himself. Lin XianEr has used this method a number of times.

But this time she didn't use it successfully. A Fei watched the snow fall outside the doorway for a long time, then asked: When are they preparing to move out?

Lin XianEr: Tomorrow morning.

A Fei: Why are they waiting until tomorrow?

Lin XianEr: Because tonight they are giving a welcoming dinner for Reverend XinMei.

A Fei quickly turned his head, and looked at her with bright eyes: There is no reason other than this?

Lin XianEr: Why does there have to be another reason?

A Fei: Reverend XinMei would not delay a day just for a meal.

Lin XianEr shifted her eyes: Although he would not stay because of a meal, he must do so because tonight there will also be another special guest.

A Fei: Who?

Lin XianEr: TieDi Xian Sheng [Mr. Iron Flute].

A Fei: TieDi Xian Sheng? Who is he?

Lin XianEr's eyes widened and appeared very startled: You

don't even know who TieDi Xian Sheng is?

A Fei: Why must I know who he is?

Lin XianEr sighed: Because even if TieDi Xian Sheng is not THE most reputable person in today's martial world, he is not far from it.

A Fei: Oh.

Lin XianEr: It is rumored that this person's martial arts is high and not any lesser than the leaders of the Seven Major Sects [Here we go with the 7 major sects again...].

At the same time she was speaking, she was watching for a reaction on A Fei's face.

But once again, A Fei disappointed her.

His face did not appear frightened at all. On the contrary, he laughed: So, they invited this TieDi Xian Sheng to take care of me.

Lin XianEr lowered her eyes: Reverend XinMei always plans things very carefully. He's afraid...

A Fei: He's afraid I will go rescue Li XunHuan, so he got TieDi Xian Sheng to be a bodyguard.

Lin XianEr: Even if they didn't look for him, TieDi Xian Sheng still must come.

A Fei: Why?

Lin XianEr: Because it seems that his beloved concubine died at the hands of the Plum Flower Bandit.

A Fei: Therefore, they will finish dinner before heading out.

Lin XianEr thought for a moment: Or maybe...

A Fei: Or maybe they will never head out.

Lin XianEr: Why?

A Fei: If my wife died at someone else's hands, I would not allow him to live long enough to get to Shaolin.

Lin XianEr changed expression: Are you afraid that once TieDi Xian Sheng arrives, he will move against Li XunHuan?

A Fei: Mmm.

Lin XianEr paused for a second, and sighed: That's right. This is a possibility. TieDi Xian Sheng never let's others persuade him, if he was set on attacking, even Reverend XinMei may not be able to stop him.

A Fei: You have finished saying everything. You may leave.

Lin XianEr: But are you planning to rescue Li XunHuan before TieDi Xian Sheng arrives?

A Fei: Whatever I'm planning, it's none of your concern. Bye.

Lin XianEr: But depending on your one person's strength, there is no way you can rescue him!

She continued on: I know that your martial arts is very high, but Tian Qi and Zhao ZhengYi are also not weak. Furthermore, Reverend XinMei is Shaolin's 2nd ranked master, his inner power is pure....

A Fei stared at her coldly, not saying a word.

Lin XianEr gasped for breath: XingYun Manor can be said to contain an assembly of masters, if you want to go perform a rescue, thats....thats.....

A Fei suddenly said: That's crazy. Right?

Lin XianEr lowered her head, not daring to look at his eyes.

A Fei laughed and laughed: Everyone can occasionally be a bit crazy, sometimes that is not necessarily a bad thing.

Lin XianEr bowed her head: I understand your meaning.

A Fei: Oh.

Lin XianEr: Because no one is expecting you to dare strike in broad daylight, their defenses won't be very tight. And besides, last night was very busy. They could be sleeping past noon...

A Fei: You've already spoken way too much.

Lin XianEr: Fine, I'll shut up. But you...you should still be careful, in the event something happens, don't forget that there is still someone in XingYun Manor who owes you a life.

A Fei waited across from XingYun Manor for an hour.

He is crouched there, like he's outside a mouse hole, not a single movement from head to toe, just a pair of sharp cat-eyes.

The wind cutted across his body, cold like a knife.

But he did not care one bit. When he was ten, in order to catch a fox, he waited on top of snow without moving for two hours.

That time he endured, because of hunger. If he didn't get that fox, it was possible he would starve! In order to survive, it is not difficult for a man to endure hardship.

But for a person to endure hardship in order that someone else can survive is not an easy thing. Very few people can pull this off.

At this time a person staggered out from XingYun Manor. Even though he was very far, A Fei could still make out that this person was a freckled man.

He naturally didn't figure that this freckled man was Lin XianEr's father, he only saw that he was a high ranking servant of XingYun Manor.

Because an ordinary servant would not be so arrogant - and if one is not a servant, he would also not be this arrogant.

Although this man's belly was not full of envy, it was full of wine.

Right now he was staggering over to the teahouse to do some heavy-duty boasting. Who knew that when he reached the street corner, he suddenly discovered that a sword was pointing at his throat.

A Fei did not like to use a sword on this type of person, but using a sword to speak was more effective than using one's tongue. He coldly said: I ask one thing, you answer one

thing. If you can't answer, I'll kill you. If you answer incorrectly, I'll also kill you. Do you understand?

Freckled Lin wanted to nod his head, but was afraid of getting stabbed by the sword. He wanted to say something, but nothing came out. The wine in his belly had changed into cold sweat.

A Fei: I ask you, Is Li XunHuan still inside the manor?

Freckled Lin: Yes...

His lips trembled a few times before he could get this word out.

A Fei: Where?

Freckled Lin: In the firewood.....firewood shed.

A Fei: Lead me there!

Freckled Lin became terrified: How could I lead you there....I don't....I don't have the means.....

A Fei: You can definitely think of a way.

He suddenly moved his sword, and with a "chi" sound, the blade of the sword stabbed into the wall.

A Fei's stare penetrated inside Freckled Lin's veins, and coldly said: You can definitely think of a way, is that right?

Freckled Lin's teeth clattered: Yes....yes.....

A Fei: Good, turn around and walk straight back inside. Don't forget I'm right behind you.

Since this wasn't the first time Freckled Lin has brought a friend here, when A Fei followed behind him, the doormen did not take much notice.

The firewood shed was not far from the kitchen, but the kitchen was very far from the Master's room. Because a gentleman is far from the kitchen, and the former master of XingYun Manor was a true gentleman.

Freckled Lin took the shortcut to the firewood shed and did not bump into anyone. Even if he was discovered, they would just think that he was going to the kitchen to steal some food and wine.

Within a lonely courtyard was a lonely building. Outside the broken door was a strong padlock.

Freckled Lin: Master....master Li is locked inside this building. Sir, you...

A Fei stared at him: I don't think you would dare lie to me.

Freckled Lin laughed: How can this servant dare to tell a lie, how can I dare to risk my own head to play a joke.

A Fei: Very well.

After saying these two words, he extended his hand and knocked the freckled man unconscious onto the floor. He ran over and with one leg, he kicked open the door.

Chapter 16: False Compassion, False Kindness

There's no one guarding the door. Maybe no one expected Ah Fei to come in the daytime. Or maybe they just want to take a nap.

This storage room has just one small window. It's as dark as most jail cells. By the stacks of firewood lies a person.

When Ah Fei saw the fur coat, the blood in his chest began to boil. No even he knows why he feels so much friendship to this person.

He stepped forward and said, "You..."

Just at this time, a sword sparkled from under the coat!

This lightning-quick sword stroke totally shocked Ah Fei!

Not only was it so unexpected, it was also very fast!

It's a good thing Ah Fei still has his sword. His sword is even faster, fast beyond belief. Even though that other person attacked first, Ah Fei still gained the initiative.

Ah Fei's sword hit the handle of the handle of his opponent.

That person's wrist shook, the sword came out of his hand.

This person is also a top swordsman. Even under such circumstances he still did not falter. With a quick roll, he retreated a few meters. At this time, Ah Fei saw his face. It's You Long Sheng.

Ah Fei doesn't know who he is, so it didn't affect his concentration. He attacked again, but also began to retreat out the room at the same time. Although his movement very fast, it's too late.

A golden sabre and a staff has already blocked his path. Also at this time, many people appeared from behind the stack of firewood. Each with arrows aimed at him. At this distance, these arrows are incredibly deadly.

No matter how powerful a person is, if he thinks he can leave the room in this situation, then he's dreaming.

Tian Qi laughed. "Is there anything you want to say, my friend?"

Ah Fei sighed. "Go ahead."

Tian Qi said, "You don't waste any time, do you. Fine, I'll grant you your wish!"

He waved his hand, and those arrows shot out of those people's hands like rain.

Just at this time, Ah Fei suddenly rolled on the ground. His left hand picked up the sword dropped by You Long Sheng. As the swords danced in his hand, the arrows bounced off. In an instant, he reached the door.

Zhao Zheng Yi let out a roar, his golden sabre came piercing down at Ah Fei.

Yet before his stroke connect, he saw a flash of light in front of him.

This sword stroke is amazingly fast.

When Zhao Zheng Yi tried to adjust, it was too late. The sword has penetrated his throat. Blood spilled out.

Tian Qi stuttered a bit.

But at this time, Ah Fei had left the room.

Tian Qi wanted to chase after Ah Fei, but then he stopped. Zhao Zheng Yi is still clutching his throat. Amazingly enough, he's still not dead.

Ah Fei flew out of the garden. But before he let, he threw You Long Sheng's sword at Tian Qi.

Tian Qi wanted to give chase, but thought better of it.

At this time You Long Sheng let out a long sigh. "This youngster really is incredibly fast!"

Tian Qi chuckled. "His luck isn't so bad either."

You Long Sheng asked, "Luck?"

Tian Qi said, "Didn't you see that two arrows hit his body?"

You Long Sheng said, "You're right. His sword strokes is still not perfect. He wasn't good enough to block all the arrows. But he somehow didn't injure himself."

Tian Qi said, "This is because he was wearing the Golden Thread Vest. I calculated for everything, but somehow forgot about this. Otherwise, he had no chance to leave this room today."

You Long Sheng looked at the sword and sighed again. "He shouldn't have come today."

Tian Qi laughed. "Don't worry too much about losing. Besides, just because he escaped our trap doesn't mean he can leave here."

Just as Ah Fei went out the door, he heard a Buddhist chant. The chant was very loud and seems to be coming from every side.

Then five monks surrounded him.

The first one is Reverend Xin Mei.

Ah Fei surveyed the situation and kept his calm. He simply said, "So even monks will trap people these days."

Reverend Xin Mei said slowly. "I do not intend to hurt anyone. You are very witty with words. But words cannot hurt others, just yourself."

He said in an even tone. Yet as the words reached Ah Fei's ears, they shook loudly.

Ah Fei said, "Looks like someone's just as good as I am with the way of words!"

He knows that if he were to escape from above, the reverend's beads can easily take advantage and cripple his

legs. So his only chance is to escape between two monks.

Yet just as he moved, the monks started to rotate around him. All five moving so fast Ah Fei could not possibly escape.

Just as Ah Fei stopped moving, so did the monks.

Reverend Xin Mei said, "As monks we don't like to kill. You have a sword in your hand and shoes on your feet. If you can break our Luo Han Formation, you may leave.

Ah Fei started to breathe deeply. His body perfectly still.

He sees that not only do these monks have incredible kung fu, they also complement each other very well. This formation doesn't have any weaknesses at all.

When Ah Fei was nine, he saw a crane being surrounded by a large snake. Although the crane has a sharp beak, it never made a move.

He originally wondered why. Only afterwards did he found out that the crane knows the snake's personality. After surrounding the crane, the snake can attack with both his head and tail in a quick and smooth fashion. If the crane attacks the head, then the tail will wrap it. If it attacks the tail, the head can bite it.

Therefore the crane simply stood there. The snake became impatient and attacked first. Only that way did the crane deter the attack quickly and fought off the snake.

To counter speed with stillness.

Therefore, as long as the monks stay still, so will he.

After a bit, the reverend seemed to have become a bit impatient. "Are you going to give up?"

"No."

Reverend Xin Mei said, "If so, then why don't you try to leave?"

Ah Fei said, "You're not going to kill me, and I can't kill you. So I can't leave."

Xin Mei chuckled. "If you can kill me, I would have no regrets."

Ah Fei said, "Good!"

With a sudden flash of the sword, Ah Fei attacked Xin Mei.

The Shaolin monks immediately moved to attack Ah Fei.

Yet somehow Ah Fei suddenly changed his movement. No one saw how he did it. They just realized that he suddenly turned the other way.

That stroke was originally aimed at Xin Mei. Now it's aimed at the fists of the other monks.

Xin Mei said. "Excellent!"

As he said the word, he rolled his sleeves. The sleeves of shaolin monks are sharp as knives. He prepared to attack Ah Fei

Although the other four monks are being attacked, he does not have to help them defend. This is one of the strong

points of the Luo Han Formation.

No one would've thought that at this instance, Ah Fei changed his move again.

When other swordsman switch to a different sword stance, they simply change the direction from which the attack comes from or the attacking point. But Ah Fei could change the direction of his whole body.

A stroke that originally attack east suddenly attack west.

Nothing else changed. Just his footwork, with such lightning speed others could not believe what they're seeing.

In the next instant, his sword cut through Xin Mei's sleeves. His sword and body as one entity. So as the sword escaped, so did the body.

Only to hear Xin Mei said, "Please walk carefully. I'll send you out."

Ah Fei then felt a surge of energy from his back, as if a huge iron rod hit him. Although he's wearing the Golden Thread Vest, he still could not help feeling much pain.

One of the monks said, "After him!"

Xin Mei said, "No need."

The monk said, "He can't escape very far. Why let him go?"

"If he can't escape very far, why bother to chase after him?"

That monk thought a moment. Then said, "Martial uncle is right."

Xin Mei looked in the direction of Ah Fei, then said, "Monks should not hurt others if possible."

Tian Qi was looking at the whole event from afar. He suddenly chuckled. "Monks are really great. If others will help them kill people, then they won't bother."

The power of a Shaolin reverend's palms really are amazing. It took a while for Ah Fei just to get his balance back.

He realized that he has a major internal injury. But at least this is an injury he can recover from.

After years of training and hardship, he's incredibly durable. It's as if his body is made of steel.

If Ah Fei really can escape, then he'd be incredibly lucky. There are very few people who could escape from the combined attack of five top Shaolin fighters.

Except Ah Fei doesn't really want to escape.

Where did they hide Li Xun Huan?

Like an eagle, Ah Fei's eyes surveyed his surroundings. He quickly dashed to the backyard garden. It's much easier to hide there.

Suddenly, he heard a laughter.

Ahead of him is a pavilion. The person laughing sits there, reading a book. He looks deeply enchanted by the book.

He's wearing plain clothing that looks worn-out. His face is skinny and yellow, with a long beard. He looks like an old scholar who doesn't know how to take care of himself.

Yet only a top level expert can make his laughter heard from so far away.

Ah Fei stopped. He stared at this man closely.

This old man didn't seem to notice Ah Fei. He turned the page and continued to read intently.

Ah Fei back stepped. After ten steps, he turned around and flew away. With only two steps he's already in the plum forest

Ah Fei took a deep breath, swallowed the blood coming up from his throat.

He realized that his injury is more serious than he originally thought. It's unlikely he can still fight in this condition.

At this moment, he heard a sound of the flute.

The music is loud and crisp. The plum flowers' petals all started dropping around Ah Fei.

He then saw a person playing the flute under the trees behind him. It's that old scholar he saw a minute ago.

Ah Fei did not walk away this time. Looking at the old man, he said, "Mr. Iron Flute?"

The sound of the flute slowly disappeared.

He stared at Ah Fei for a long time, then asked suddenly, "You're injured?"

Ah Fei was surprised, thinking that this man really has great

eyesight.

Mr. Iron Flute then asked, "Injured on the back?"

Ah Fei said, "Since you know about the injury, why bother asking?"

"Xin Mei hurt you?"

Ah Fei said, "Humph."

Mr. Iron Flute shook his head. "Looks like the reverend of Shaolin isn't all that great."

Ah Fei asked, "Why do you say that?"

Mr. Iron Flute explained. "For someone in his position, he shouldn't have attacked you from behind. And if he did, he should not have allowed you to live long enough to see me."

He suddenly smiled. "Could it be that the this old monk want someone else to help him kill you?"

Ah Fei said, "Let me tell you three things. First, if he hadn't attacked me from behind, he would've never had a chance to hurt me. Second, even though he hit me, he still couldn't kill me. Third, you can't kill me either!"

Mr. Iron Flute laughed loudly. "You really are very arrogant, young man."

He suddenly stopped laughing. "Since you're hurt, I shouldn't fight you. But you're too arrogant, so I have to teach you a lesson."

Ah Fei already felt he said too much. He didn't want to say anything else.

Mr. Iron Flute said, "Because you're hurt, I'll let you have the first three moves."

Ah Fei looked at him, then suddenly chuckled.

As he chuckled his sword returned to his waist. Turned around and walked away.

Mr. Iron Flute said, "Now that you've met me. Do you really think you can leave alive?"

Ah Fei didn't even turn around. He simply said coldly, "If I don't go, then you have to die!"

Mr. Iron Flute couldn't help but laugh. "Who's dying, you or me?"

Ah Fei said, "No one could let me have three moves first."

"So if I do so, then I have to die?"

"Yes."

Mr. Iron Flute said, "Then why don't you try?"

Ah Fei stopped talking, turned around, staring at him.

He never saw anyone's eyes like this.

This pair of eyes contain no emotions. They seem to be made of stone. When they look you, it's like a god looking at a mortal being.

Mr. Iron Flute subconsciously retreated a few steps.

At this moment, Ah Fei made his move.

When his sword attacks, it never misses.

This is Ah Fei's philosophy. If he didn't have total confidence, he would not pull out his sword!

The snowflakes and the plum petals flew in the air together, creating a beautiful scene. Only to see Mr. Iron Flute's body flowing and dancing among the falling snow.

Ah Fei didn't even look up. His sword returned.

Mr. Iron Flute flew back down. His descent is very slow, like a piece of paper dropping down. A pool of blood appeared on the snow.

Ah Fei looked at the snow on the ground, then said, "No one can let me have three moves. Not even one move!"

Mr. Iron Flute leaned on a tree. His face pale white. His chest full of blood.

He never had the chance to use his worldly renowned iron flute!

Ah Fei then said, "But you didn't die. Because you kept your words."

He then chuckled. "At least you're better than Xin Mei."

Xin Mei said he would never hurt Ah Fei. As long as Ah Fei escaped his formation, he can leave. But instead he attacked from behind. This is a lesson Ah Fei swore he'll

never forget.

Mr. Iron Flute then said, "You still have two more moves."

"Two more?"

Mr. Iron Flute bit his teeth, forcing a smile. "I said three moves. You only used one."

Ah Fei looked at him for a while, then replied. "Fine!"

He attacked slowly and lightly. Two punches that barely landed. "Great. Now I've made three..."

At this moment, he heard a light sound, Ten "Cold Star Thunder Storm Needles" came out of the iron flute!

Mr. Iron Flute's pale face suddenly brightened. He said, "Today I learned a lesson. Never let someone have the first three attacks. You should also learn a lesson. That is, if you attack, the opponent better die. Otherwise, don't bother attacking in the first place!"

Ah Fei bit his teeth while looking at the needle on his leg. He responded one word at a time. "I'll never forget this!"

Mr. Iron Flute said, "Good. You can leave now."

Before Ah Fei could respond, he heard someone yell from afar.

"Elder. Old Iron Elder. Did you get him?"

Mr. Iron Flute told Ah Fei, "Hurry. I am unable to kill you, but I also don't want you to die in someone else's hands!"

Ah Fei immediately rolled away.

His legs cannot move, but his hands can.

He felt a lot of blood surging from his throat. Although he's desperately trying to keep it down, it's all in vain.

Even if no one chases after him, he knows that he doesn't have that long to live. He only want to see Li Xun Huan, to tell him that he did his best.

At this moment, a shadow came quickly towards him.

There's only one candle in the room.

Long Xiao4 Yun looked at Li Xun Huan. He waited for Li Xun Huan to finish coughing, then let him drink another cup of wine.

After he finished this cup, Li Xun Huan smiled. "Big brother. Noticed that not a drop came out? Even though I'm hanging upside down, I can still drink every drop of wine brought to my mouth."

Long Xiao4 Yun wanted to smile, but he couldn't. "Why don't you let me unseal your pressure points?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I can't stand temptations. If you unsealed my pressure points, I'd probably escape."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "Now... now there's no one's here. Don't you understand what I'm trying to do?"

Li Xun Huan cut him off, "Big brother. Don't you understand what I'm trying to do?"

Long Xiao4 Yun said, “I know, but...”

Li Xun Huan smiled. “I know what you want to say. Actually you didn’t do anything wrong. Just for this cup of wine, I’ll never regret our friendship.”.

Chapter 17: True Nature Revealed

After Long Xiao Yun heard these words, he lowered his head for a long time “Tomorrow... tomorrow you’ll be leaving. I...”

Li Xun Huan said, “Don’t even think about sending me off. I never like to send others off and don’t want others to do the same for me. When I see people’s expressions on such occasions, I just want to vomit.”

He chuckled. “Besides, I’m not going very far. Maybe I’ll be back in a few days.”

Long Xiao Yun also looked energetic again. “You’re right. When you come back, I’ll definitely welcome you. Then we can get drunk together.”

Suddenly someone said, “You know perfectly well that he’ll never come back after leaving, why do you still lie to yourself?”

Lin Shi Yin came in. Her beautiful face looking very frail.

Li Xun Huan’s heart felt a deep pain. Yet he just kept smiling. “Why won’t I be back? This is the place of all my best friends. I...”

Lin Shi Yin didn’t let him finish. She just said coldly, “Who’s your friend? You have absolutely no friends here.”

She suddenly pointed at Long Xiao4 Yun. "You think he's your friend? If he's your friend, then he should release you this instant."

Long Xiao Yun said, "But he.."

Lin Shi Yin said, "He's not leaving because he doesn't want you in trouble. But why don't you release him? He can decide whether to escape or not. But you're the one who decides to release him or not."

She didn't wait for Long Xiao4 Yun to respond, turned around, and left.

Long Xiao4 Yun stood up and said, "No matter what you want to do, I still should release you."

Li Xun Huan started laughing.

Long Xiao4 Yun looked bewildered. "Wh..why are you laughing?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Since when did you start taking orders from a woman? The Long Xiao4 Yun I remember is a true man. Not a poor guy afraid of his wife."

Long Xiao4 Yun clenched his fists. Tears came out of his eyes. "Brother, you... you're so good to me. It's not that I don't know what you're thinking. It's just that how... how can I ever repay you?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I just happen to need a favor from you."

"What do you need? Not matter what you ask, I'll do as you

say.”

Li Xun Huan said, “Remember that youngster Ah Fei from last night?”

“Of course.”

Li Xun Huan said, “If he ends up in some trouble, please take care of him.”

Long Xiao Yun sighed. “Even under this situation, you’re still looking out for others. Have you ever thought for yourself?”

Li Xun Huan said, “Just tell me if you’ll do it or not.”

“Of course I’ll fulfill your request. Except I might never get to see him.”

Li Xun Huan became shocked. “Why? Could it be that...”

Long Xiao Yun did his best to smile. “You saw him leave yesterday. Why would he come back?”

Li Xun Huan sighed. “I also wish that he’d never come back, except I know he will.”

Long Xiao Yun said, “If he come to save you, then why is he not here yet?”

He took a deep breath. “Brother. I know you care about friends more than anything else in the world, but others aren’t all like you.”

Li Xun Huan tried to smile. “It’s his decision what he wants to do. I just wish big brother to remember that he’s my best friend when you see him.”

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "Your friend is my friend."

Suddenly someone outside yelled, "Fourth Master Long... Fourth Master Long."

Long Xiao Yun stood up, then sat back down again. "Brother, you..."

Li Xun Huan said with a smile, "I don't need to drink anymore, just go. And don't forget not to send me off tomorrow."

Long Xiao4 Yun walked to the door and saw Tian Qi standing under a tree. He quickly walked over and asked quietly, "Did you get him?"

Tian Qi said, "No."

"What? All those people you sent, plus Reverend Xin Mei and Mr. Iron Flute... couldn't even take care of a kid?"

Tian Qi said, "But this kid really is unbelievable. Even a bit scary. Not only did he injure Brother Zhao, he also injured Mr. Iron Flute."

Long Xiao4 Yun stomped his feet. "I knew that this kid is not easy to deal with. But you said Mr. Iron Flute can deal with him."

Tian Qi said, "Even though he escaped, he did get injured by Xin Mei's palm."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "In that case, he shouldn't have escaped very far. Why don't you chase after him?"

Tian Qi said, "The Shaolin monks are already doing this. I'll tell you when I get the good news."

Long Xiao4 Yun said, "I'll go take a look. You get someone to guard here."

There's a fake mountain behind the tree.

Just as the two of them left, a person appeared from behind the mountain. Her beautiful eyes full of shock and disbelief, and also pain and hate.

Her whole body kept shaking, tears filled her face.

Lin Shi Yin's heart broke into pieces. Then, as if she made an important decision, she began to walk over to Li Xun Huan's room.

Then she heard several footsteps. Lin Shi Yin immediately hid behind the fake mountain again.

Tian Qi led eight men here and said, "Guard him. Don't let anyone in the room, whoever goes in dies."

He's in a hurry to capture Ah Fei. So even before he finished talking, he already left.

Lin Shi Yin bit her lips. So hard blood came out.

She hated herself for always not caring about martial arts, never really practicing it.

Now she understood that there are certain things that only fighting can solve.

She can't figure out any way to enter that room.

Suddenly she heard something. The person's footsteps aren't methodical, but very fast.

Lin Shi Yin realized that this Mr. Iron Flute.

She heard Mr. Iron Flute say loudly, "Is that Li guy in this room?"

A guard said, "We're not sure."

Mr. Iron Flute said, "Fine. Let me go in and check."

That guard said, "Master Tian said no one can go in."

Mr. Iron Flute said, "Tian Qi? Who cares about him? Do you know who I am?"

That guard looked at his blood-covered body. "No one can go in."

Mr. Iron Flute said, "Very well."

He raised his hands a bit. The needles shot out.

Li Xun Huan closed his eyes, as if he's asleep.

Suddenly he heard shrieks of pain. The sound was not loud, and quite short.

He raised his eyebrows. "Is someone trying to save me?"

Then he saw a man carrying an iron flute walking into the room. His face full of murderous intent.

Li Xun Huan's eyes rested on his iron flute. "Mr. Iron Flute."

Mr. Iron Flute looked at his face. "Someone sealed your pressure points?"

Li Xun Huan smiled. "You know that if there's wine in front of me and I'm not drinking, then I must not be able to move."

Mr. Iron Flute said, "If you can't move, then I really shouldn't kill you. But I must kill you."

"Huh?"

Mr. Iron Flute stared at him. "You're not going to ask why?"
Li Xun Huan chuckled. "If I asked, then you'll probably get say it and get mad. If I then try to explain, you won't believe me, and still would kill me. So why bother talking at all?"

Mr. Iron Flute suddenly looked incredibly sad. "Ru Yi, you really died a horrible death. But now at least I have avenged you."

He raised his iron flute.

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Ru Yi, when you see me you'll definitely be shocked. Because even though you don't know me, I know you..."

Suddenly, Lin Shi Yin walked into the room. "Hold on, I have something to say."

Mr. Iron Flute turned around in shock. "Mistress? I suggest you don't interfere with me. No one can interfere."

Lin Shi Yin's face turned green. "I don't want to prevent you from doing anything. But this is my house. If someone is to

be killed I should be the one to do it.”

“But why do you want to kill him?”

Lin Shi Yin said, “I have more reasons to kill him than you. You want to kill him to revenge your wife. But I’m doing it for my son. I only have one son.”

Her point was obvious. You don’t just have one wife.

Mr. Iron Flute thought for a long time. “Fine, you go first.”

He’s confident that his iron flute needles are quick as lightning. So even if she goes first, he can still kill him before she does. But as Lin Shi Yin walked past him, she suddenly turned around and attacked.

Although Lin Shi Yin’s martial arts is fairly low. She’s still not weakling. For this palm she used all her strength. Plus Mr. Iron Flute did not expect it at all, so her attack worked.

Due to his old injuries which got reopened, his whole body shook, blood came out, and he fainted.

Lin Shi Yin became startled, and almost faint herself.

Li Xun Huan knows that she has never so much as stepped on an ant before! Now seeing her hurt someone, he doesn’t know whether to be sad or happy. But he suppressed those emotions and instead simply said, “Why the hell are you here again?”

Lin Shi Yin took a few deep breaths before she could stop shaking. “I’m here to let you go.”

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Have I not made myself clear enough? I'm not going."

Lin Shi Yin said, "I know you won't leave because of Long Xiao4 Yun. But you don't know that he...he.."

She started to shake again, even worse than last time. She clenched her fists, her nails cutting through her skin. With all her power, she said, "He already betrayed you. They were all in it together."

After she said this, she lose all energy. If it weren't for a chair there, she probably would've fallen. She thought Li Xun Huan must be shocked by these words.

Yet Li Xun Huan didn't change his expression at all. Not even a tiny bit. Instead he chuckled. "It must be some sort of misunderstanding. How could he betray me?"

Lin Shi Yin used all her energy to hold the table. The items on the table all shook.

She said, "I saw this with my own eyes, heard this with my own ears."

Li Xun Huan said, "Your eyes and ears are mistaken then."

Lin Shi Yin said, "So you don't believe me?"

Li Xun Huan said gently, "You've been too tired these couple of days. So it's not a big deal that you'd be deluded. Go take a nap. By this time tomorrow, you'll realize that your husband's a good man."

Lin Shi Yin looked at him. Her mind lost. After a long time, she suddenly fell onto the table and started to cry.

Li Xun Huan closed his eyes. He couldn't bare to look at her. His voice trembling, "Why do you..."

Before he could finish, he coughed up some blood.

Lin Shi Yin finally could no longer control herself. Ten years of suppressed emotions all bursted out at this moment.

She rushed towards Li Xun Huan. "If you don't go, I'll die in front of you!"

Li Xun Huan bit down hard on his teeth. He said slowly. "What does your death have to do with me?"

Lin Shi Yin looked up at him, staring. Her voice weak. "You... You... You..."

Every time she spoke, she stepped back a bit. Suddenly, she felt as if she just fell into someone.

Long Xiao4 Yun's face looks heavy as iron.

He tightly wrapped his hands around her waist. As if afraid that should he release her, she'd disappear from his life forever.

Lin Shi Yin saw his hands. Regaining her senses, she said coldly, "Release your hands. And please remember to never ever touch me again."

He finally released his hands, looking at her. "So you know everything?"

Lin Shi Yin said coldly, "There's no everlasting secret in this

world.”

“You.. You already told him?”

Li Xun Huan suddenly smiled. “Actually, she didn’t need to tell me. I already knew everything.”

Long Xiao4 Yun originally couldn’t face him. Only now did he raise his head. “You knew?”

“Yes.”

“When?”

Li Xun Huan sighed. “When you held my hand, and allowed Tian Qi to seal my pressure points. But... even though I knew it was you, I don’t blame you.”

Long Xiao4 Yun said, “If you knew, why didn’t you say it?”

“Why do I need to say it?”

Lin Shi Yin looked at Li Xun Huan. “You didn’t say it because of me, right?”

Li Xun Huan raised his eyebrows. “Because of you?”

Lin Shi Yin said, “You don’t want to hurt me, or break up this family. Because this family was your..”

She couldn’t finish. Tears filled her face.

Li Xun Huan suddenly burst out laughing. “Why do women always think everything revolves around them? I didn’t it say it because it’s pointless. I didn’t leave because I knew they won’t let me.”

Lin Shi Yin said, "It doesn't matter what you say now. Because I already know..."

Li Xun Huan said, "What do you know? Do you know why he did that? He was afraid that I'd break up your family. That's why he did what he did! Because he views his family as being more important than anything else in the world. He feels that you are the most important person in his life."

Lin Shi Yin stared at him, then also suddenly burst out laughing. "He ruined you, yet still help him? Great. You really are a great friend. But don't you realize that I'm also a person? How could you do this to me?"

Li Xun Huan began to cough endlessly, coughing up blood everywhere.

Long Xiao Yun lost all his control and started to yell. "I was originally the head of this family. But once you came, I feel like a guest. I had a great son. But when you came, he became crippled."

Li Xun Huan sighed. "You're right. I really shouldn't have come."

Lin Shi Yin closed her eyes. Tears covered all parts of her face. "If you thought of me for even one instant, you shouldn't have done this."

Long Xiao Yun said, "I know. But I'm just too scared."

Lin Shi Yin asked, "Scared of what?"

Long Xiao Yun said, "I'm scared that you'd leave me."

Because even if you don't say it, I still know that you... you haven't forgotten him. I'm afraid you'll go back into his arms."

Lin Shi Yin suddenly jumped up and yelled, "Get your hands off of me! Not only are you a vicious person, but what kind of person did you think I am? What kind of a person did you think he is?"

She dropped to the floor, sobbing uncontrollably, "Did you forget that I... I am your wife?"

Long Xiao Yun just stood there like he's made of wood. Only his tears are moving.

Li Xun Huan looked at them, thinking to himself, "Just who's fault is this? Who was wrong..."

Only to hear someone say, "Are you awake?"

This voice is so lovely, so tender.

When Ah Fei opened his eyes, he saw a face of a goddess. This face has the world's cutest, kindest smile. Those eyes contain the most profound love.

This face looks almost like his mother.

He remembers that when he was ill as a kid, his mother would sit by his side like this, also watching over him tenderly.

But that was a long time ago. So long ago even he almost forgot about them...

Ah Fei tried to get off the bed. "Where am I?"

Just as he sat up, he fell back down again.

Lin Xian Er gently pulled him up, and said sweetly, "Don't worry about where you are. Just think of this as your home."

"My home?"

He never had a home.

Lin Xian Er said, "I think your home must be very warm, because you have such a great mom. She must be very gentle, very beautiful, and love you very much."

Ah Fei just sat there. After a long time, he said, "I don't have a home, nor a mother."

Lin Xian Er looked a little confused. "But... but when you were unconscious, you kept yelling her name."

Ah Fei did not move, nor did his face show any expressions. "She died when I was seven!"

Although he still has a blank face, his eyes became watery.

Lin Xian Er lowered her head. "I'm sorry. I... I shouldn't have brought out your sad memories."

After a while, Ah Fei asked, "Did you save me?"

Lin Xian Er said, "By that time, you've already fainted. So I carried you over here. As long as you stay, I promise you that no one will come in."

Ah Fei said, "Right before my mother died, she kept telling me to never accept anyone's gratitude. I never forgot those

words. But now..."

His stone face suddenly became alive, yelling, "Now I owe you my life!"

Lin Xian Er said gently, "You don't owe me anything. Don't forget, you've save my life before too."

Ah Fei kept on sighing. "Why did you save me? Why save me?"

Lin Xian Er looked at him kindly. She couldn't help but put her hand on his face. "Don't think about anything right now. Later...later you'll know why I...I saved you. Why I'm doing this for you."

Her hands really are beautiful.

Ah Fei closed his eyes.

He never thought he would have this kind of feeling.

He asked, "What time is it?"

"No yet midnight."

Ah Fei tried to get up again.

Lin Xian Er asked, "Where are you going!"

Ah Fei bit his teeth. "I can't let them take away Li Xun Huan."

Lin Xian Er said, "But he's already gone."

Ah Fei feel back down onto the bed. His face full of sweat.

“But you said it’s not yet midnight.”

Lin Xian Er said, “I did say that, but Li Xun Huan was taken away yesterday morning?”

Ah Fei looked shocked. “I’ve been asleep for that long?”

Lin Xian Er said, “Your injuries are very serious. Other than you, I don’t think anyone else could’ve stayed alive. So right now you must listen to me and wait for your injuries to heal.”

“But Li...”

Lin Xian Er said, “I won’t let you bring him up. Because his situation is not as bad as yours. Even if you’re going to save him, wait til your injuries have healed.”

She moved him so his head rested on the pillows. “Don’t worry, since Reverend Xin Mei is personally escorting him, he’s not going to be in any trouble on the road.

Li Xun Huan sat on a chair in the carriage, looking at Tian Qi and Xin Mei. He thought it was kind of interesting, and couldn’t help but smile.

Tian Qi stared at him. “What’s so funny?”

Li Xun Huan said, “I just think it’s really interesting.”

“What is?”

Li Xun Huan yawned, closed his eyes, as if going to sleep.

Tian Qi shook him. “What’s so interesting about me?”

Li Xun Huan said, "I'm sorry. I wasn't talking about you. There are many interesting people in this world. But you're not one of them. You're ridiculously boring."

Tian Qi looked pissed, but finally removed his hands.

Xin Mei couldn't help but ask, "Do you think I'm interesting?"

He's never met anyone who thought he was interesting.

Li Xun Huan yawned again. He said with a smile, "I find you interesting because I've never been in a carriage with a monk before. I've always thought that monks never ride on a horse nor in a carriage."

Xin Mei also smiled. "Monks are also people. Not only do we have to ride in carriages, but also eat."

Li Xun Huan said, "But if you're going to sit in a carriage, why not sit in a more comfortable position? The way you're sitting makes people feel you have some skin irritation."

Xin Mei's expression suddenly changed. "Do you want me to close your mouth?"

Xin Mei looked at Tian Qi. Tian Qi's hands moved to one of Li Xun Huan's pressure point. He smiled, "If I press this finger down, you know what will happen, right?"

Li Xun Huan chuckled. "If you press down, then you're never be able to hear many interesting things."

Tian Qi said, "In that case, I guess I'll just..."

In the middle of the sentence, the horse suddenly let out a

loud scream, then stopped.

Tian Qi yelled to the people outside, "What's going on? What..."

When he opened up the curtain and looked outside, his face turned pale.

A person is standing in the snow. His right hand is holding the carriage, preventing the horse from going forward. He just stood there motionless.

Chapter 18: Many Surprises in One Day

That person is wearing a green blouse. This blouse would be considered too long for most people, but on him, it's actually too short.

He's already tall enough to scare people. But he had to wear a strange long hat. From afar, he almost look like a tree.

The ability to instantly stop a galloping horse really is scary. But his eyes are even scarier, those eyes that don't look human.

His eyes are green, and they glitter.

Just as Tian Qi looked out, he immediately came back inside. He does not look well.

Xin Mei asked, "There's someone outside?"

Tian Qi said, "Yi Ku?"

Li Xun Huan smiled. "Unfortunately he's just like all my other friends. He just want my head."

Xin Mei's face looks heavy. He pushed open the door, then said, "Mr. Yi?"

The Green Devil Hand looked at him, then said coldly, "Are you Xin Hu? Or Xin Mei?"

Reverend Xin Mei said, "Monks don't lie. There's also a Mr. Tian Qi and Mr. Li onboard."

Yi Ku said, "Good. Just give me Li Xun Huan and I'll let you go."

Xin Mei said, "What if I don't agree?"

Yi Ku said, "Then I'll just have to first kill you. Then kill Li Xun Huan!"

He suddenly reached out his hand. Only to see a green flash, the Green Devil Hand came towards Xin Mei.

Xin Mei said a prayer, and 4 gray clothed youngster came. After Xin Mei dodged this first attack, the young monks surrounded Yi Ku.

Then Yi Ku started to laugh.

During his laughter, he shot out an arrow with green smoke. Xin Mei immediately said, "Hold your breath!"

While he warned his students, he forgot himself. When said the word 'hold', he felt a strange odor enter his mouth.

When the other monks see his expression change, they all panicked.

Only to see Xin Mei immediately flew back a few meters, sat down, and started to meditate. He needed to use his inner strength to force out the poison.

The Shaolin monks then formed a wall in front of him. They only care for Xin Mei's safety, forgetting Li Xun Huan.

Yet Yi Ku didn't even bother to look at them. He just walked to the carriage.

Li Xun Huan is still there. But Tian Qi is gone.

Yi Ku stared at Li Xun Huan. "Did you kill Qiu Du?"

"Yes."

Yi Ku said, "Good. To exchange your life for Qiu Du's is not a bad deal for you."

He raised his Green Devil Hand...

Ah Fei looked at the ceiling. He hasn't spoke for a long time.

Lin Xian Er said sweetly, "What are you thinking?"

Ah Fei said, "Do you think he'll be in danger on the road?"

Lin Xian Er smiled. "Of course not. He has Reverend Xin Mei and Tian Qi escorting him. Who'd dare try to hurt him?"

She stroke her hand on Ah Fei's hair. "If you're thinking of me, then just sleep. I'll be here. I promise I won't leave."

Ah Fei stared at her. Her eyes are so warm.

Ah Fei finally went to sleep.

Yi Ku stared at Li Xun Huan. "What else do you have to say?"

Li Xun Huan looked at his bright Green Devil Hand. "Just one sentence."

"What's that?"

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Why come all the way here to die?"

He suddenly flipped his hand!

A dagger flashed brightly, Yi Ku suddenly fell back.

Much blood appeared in the snow!

By now Yi Ku is far away. He yelled, "Li Xun Huan, Don't forget. I..."

When he got here, he stopped.

The winter wind cuts like a knife. The snowfield suddenly became eerily quiet.

Suddenly someone clapped. Tian Qi came out from behind the carriage, smiling and clapping. "Great. Great. Great. Little Li's Flying Dagger really does never miss. As incredible as everyone say it is."

Li Xun Huan thought for a while. "If you unsealed all my pressure points, then he couldn't have escaped."

Tian Qi laughed. "If I unsealed all your pressure points, then you'd be the one who'd have escaped. With only hand to move, one dagger to use, you've managed to seriously injure Yi Ku. I really have to be extra careful against a guy like you."

By this time those monks have carried Xin Mei over. When he got on the car, Xin Mei immediately said, "Let's go."

After a while, he said, "The Green Devil Hand really is venomous."

Tian Qi smiled. "But not as venomous as Little Li's Flying Dagger."

Xin Mei looked at Li Xun Huan. "I didn't expect you to save us."

Li Xun Huan chuckled. "I was just saving myself. Don't worry about it. Don't bother to thank me either."

Tian Qi said, "I just asked him if he wanted to go with us to Shaolin, or stay with Yi Ku. Then unsealed the pressure point for his right arm and gave him a dagger."

He snickered. "That is already enough."

Xin Mei said, "The legendary Little Li's Dagger... really is fast!"

Although his reflexes aren't great, he does have great inner power. By nightfall, Xin Mei forced out all the

poison in his body. By next morning, he has almost made a full recovery.

Then they found a small restaurant by the road. A meal without wine is like a dish without seasoning. Light and tasteless.

Tian Qi said, "It's good enough that you have food to eat. Don't expect too much."

Shaolin rules really are strict. These monk didn't make any noise during dinner. Although it's just some plain vegetables, but they're used to that. Besides, after traveling for such a long time, they're already quite hungry. So they ate a lot.

Only Xin Mei, since he just recovered from an injury, had to ask for some special food. So he did not eat.

Li Xun Huan picked up a piece of tofu, put it by his mouth, then put it down. His expression changed. "We can't eat this."

Tian Qi said, "If Master Tan Hua can't stand these plain dishes, then I guess he can only go on an empty stomach."

Li Xun Huan said plainly, "This food is poisoned!"

Tian Qi laughed. "Just because we won't allow you to drink doesn't mean..."

He suddenly stopped laughing. As if someone stuffed something down his throat.

Because he saw that those four Shaolin monks' faces

looked grey. Yet they didn't seem to notice, just kept on eating.

Xin Mei immediately said, "Stop eating. Meditate to protect your vital organs."

Those monks didn't even know what's going on. They just smiled. "Is martial uncle ordering us?"

Xin Mei quickly said, "Of course. Can't you tell you've been poisoned?"

"Who's poisoned?"

The four of them suddenly looked at each other. All said at the same time, "Your face..."

Before they finished that sentence, all four fell down. By the time Xin Mei looked at them again, their body has begun to rot.

The poison is not only tasteless and odorless, but also prevent the poisoned to not notice any problems. By the time they realize that they're poisoned, they're beyond help!

Tian Qi shuddered. "What kind of poison is this? How could it be so powerful?"
But who's the culprit?

Li Xun Huan stared at the scorpion. "I knew he would come sooner or later."

Tian Qi asked loudly, "Who? You know who it is?"

Li Xun Huan said, "There are two types of poison in this

world. One's from grass and other plants. The other is from snakes and insects. Many people can produce poison from plants. But few can make poison from snakes and insects. Only one person can make such a poison kill people without them even realizing it.

Tian Qi was taken aback, "You mean the Five Poison Kid?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I was also hoping it wouldn't be him either."

"Why would he come here? What did he come here to do?"

Li Xun Huan said, "He came for me."

He knows that Li Xun Huan can't possibly have a friend like this. So just as he started to say something, he changed his mind. "Looks like you don't have many friends, but quite a few enemies."

Li Xun Huan said, "I don't really mind having lots of enemies. But a person only needs a few friends, because sometimes friends are even scarier than enemies."

Xin Mei suddenly cut in. "How did you know that there's poison in the food?"

Li Xun Huan said, "It's like when I gamble. I simply go with my gut feeling. If someone else asks me why, I can't really answer."

Xin Mei looked at him suspiciously. Then said, "From now on. We eat whatever he eats."

They then gave those dead monks to a local monastery, and started to travel again.

Although they can go for a long time without eating, the driver doesn't want to go hungry with them. So he found a little shop and started to eat. He carried some bread in a sack as he came back, eating some on the way.

Tian Qi kept staring at him. After a while, he suddenly asked, "How much were these bread?"

The driver smiled. "Very cheap, and pretty tasty, why don't you try some?"

Tian Qi smiled. "These bread can't be poisonous. Why don't you have some, reverend?"

Xin Mei said, "Have some, Mr. Li."

Li Xun Huan chuckled. "I never thought you two would become so polite."

He picked up a piece in his left hand, because only his left hand can move. Then he said, "We can't eat this."

Tian Qi said. "But the driver has no problems with it."

Li Xun Huan said, "He can eat it, but we cannot."

"Why?"

"Because he's not the person Five Poison Kid want to kill."

Tian Qi laughed coldly. "Are you trying to trick us into

starving?”

Li Xun Huan said, “If you don’t believe me, why don’t you try it?”

Tian Qi stared at him, then asked the driver to stop. He gave half a piece to the driver and asked him to eat it. The driver ate the whole thing and showed no signs of being poisoned. Tian Qi said coldly, “You still think we can’t eat this bread?”

Li Xun Huan said, “Nope.”

He yawned. Then seemingly went to sleep.

Tian Qi was annoyed, “I’ll eat it just to spite you.”

Although he said this, he still didn’t eat the bread. Then he saw a wild dog walk by, looking very hungry.

Tian Qi immediately gave a piece to the dog. The dog didn’t seem to care for it. It just ate a little bit before leaving.

Yet after it walked a few steps, the dog suddenly yelled loudly, jumped up, and then dropped dead.

Only now did Tian Qi and Xin Mei really become surprised.

Li Xun Huan sighed. “I told you. Unfortunately, only a dog died. Not you.”

Tian Qi was looking pretty confident with himself. But now his whole expression changed. He stared at the

driver, asking, "What's this all about?"

The driver kept shaking. "I don't know. I bought the bread from the shop."

Tian Qi grabbed him. "How come the dog died but not you? Unless you're the one who put in the poison?"

The driver became so scared he couldn't respond.

Li Xun Huan said, "It's useless to ask him. Because he doesn't know what's going on either."

"If he doesn't, then who does?"

"I do."

Tian Qi gathered himself. "You do? Then explain."

Li Xun Huan said, "The bread is poisoned, but his soup has the antidote."

Tian Qi said coldly, "If that's the case, then we could've drank the soup, right?"

Li Xun Huan said, "If you drank the soup, then the poison would've been in there."

The Five Poison Kid's tricks really are impossible to guard. Against someone like him, you can only shut your mouth tight.

Xin Mei said, "Who cares if we have to go hungry for a couple of days? Let's just keep going."

Tian Qi said, "I'm afraid that even if we don't eat there

will still be trouble.”

“Why?”

“Because he might be waiting for us to become weak before attacking.”

Xin Mei doesn’t know how to respond.

Tian Qi’s eyes suddenly glowed. “Actually, I have a suggestion.”

“What?”

Tian Qi said quietly, “His target aren’t us. So if we just...”

He looked at Li Xun Huan and stopped talking.

Xin Mei’s face became heavy. “Since I already promised to take him to Shaolin, I can’t let him die on the road!”

Tian Qi did not say anything else. But every time he looked at Li Xun Huan, his eyes screamed murder.

Not only do monks have to sleep and eat, they also have to use the restroom.

Yet Xin Mei somehow realized this. So whatever he does, he won’t let Li Xun Huan out of his sight.

Although Tian Qi became annoyed and impatient, he can’t do anything about it.

The next day, they saw a little shop selling tortillas by the road. It’s business is quite good. A lot of people are waiting in line to buy it. When they get it, they

immediately start eating. No one died of poison.

Tian Qi couldn't resist. "Can we eat this?"

Li Xun Huan said, "They can eat it. Only we cannot. Even if ten thousand people eat it and have no problems, if we eat it, we'll be poisoned to death!"

If he had said this two days ago, Tian Qi obviously would not believe him. But when he said it now, Tian Qi has to listen.

Only to hear a child cry, "Mom! Mom! I want to eat the tortilla."

They saw two kids around seven or eight by the side of that shop, yelling and jumping up and down. A woman in a store by the shop came out and slapped them on the face.

That kid cried, "When I become rich, I'll never eat tortillas again. I'll just eat egg noodles."

Li Xun Huan sighed. The gap between the rich and poor really is great. In these kids' minds, even egg noodles are considered a delicacy.

The street is narrow. There are lots of people here. So their carriage couldn't get across even after a long time.

This time those two kids brought out two bowls of porridge. They kept staring at the other people who are eating the tortillas.

Tian Qi suddenly got off the carriage, put some coins on the counter of the tortilla shop and took some tortillas.

He then walked up to the little boys and said, "I give you my tortillas. You give me your porridge, ok?"

Those kids' eyes grew very bright, thinking there can't possibly be anyone this nice.

"I'll also give you some money to buy candy with, ok?"

Xin Mei couldn't help but chuckle. Tian Qi finally brought the two bowls of porridge onto the carriage. Xin Mei smiled. "You really are tricky."

Tian Qi laughed. "Well, we certainly need the energy to keep traveling."

He gave a bowl to Xin Mei.

Although this porridge has no flavor, they still ate it like an extravagant meal, because they're certain it's not poisoned.

Tian Qi looked at Li Xun Huan and chuckled. "Do you think it's safe to eat this?"

Before he can respond, Li Xun Huan began to cough.

Tian Qi said with a smile. "If Five Poison Kid knew beforehand that the kid wants to eat tortillas, and that we'd use tortillas to exchange for his porridge, and put in the poison in beforehand, then I'll gladly die."

As he said those words, he gulped down the whole bowl.

Xin Mei didn't think the porridge was poisoned either. Because no matter what, Five Poison Kid can't possibly predict the future!

Chapter 19: Impossible to Explain

Xin Me is also quite sure that the porridge has no poison. But he is a monk after all. So he only took two sips when Tian Qi finished the whole bowl.

Tian Qi smiled. "At this rate, we should be on Mt. Song (where Shaolin is located... and ½ hour driver from my hometown in China, I might add) by tomorrow morning."

Xin Mei also looked relieved. He said, "There are bound to be some disciples coming to greet us these couple of days. As long as..."

He suddenly stopped talking. His body started to shake, dropped his bowl, spilling porridge all over his blouse.

Tian Qi's face became pale. "Reverend.... You..."

"There is poison in this soup?"

Xin Mei sighed. Unable to speak.

Tian Qi grabbed Li Xun Huan's shirt. "Look at my face. Is my face..."

He suddenly stopped, because he knows there's no need to ask.

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Although I've always found you disgusting, I still don't want to see you die."

Tian Qi's face has no colors. His body shaking, staring at Li Xun Huan. Then he laughed, "Although you don't want to see me die, I want to see you die! I should've killed you a long time ago!"

Li Xun Huan said, "You think it's a bit late to kill me now?"

Tian Qi bit his teeth. "That's right. It really is late to kill you know. But fortunately, not too late."

His hands grabbed Li Xun Huan's throat.

Ah Fei stood up.

His face looks very pale, but his body is straight.

Ah Fei circled the room twice, then asked, "Do you think he can arrive at Shaolin safely?"

Lin Xian Er said, "You really can't go three sentences without bringing up Li Xun Huan, can you? Can't you talk about something besides him? Why don't you talk about me? Or yourself?"

Ah Fei looked at her calmly, then asked, "Do you think he can safely arrive at Shaolin?"

No matter what Lin Xian Er says, he still only has that one sentence.

Lin Xian Er laughed. "Oh, you! I can't do anything about

you, can I.” She pulled Ah Fei down to sit beside her, then said sweetly, “Don’t worry. He’s probably having tea with Reverend Xin Hu right now. Shaolin’s tea is very famous, you know.”

Ah Fei finally calmed down, and even smiled. “From what I know, even if he’s captured, he still wouldn’t drink tea.”

Li Xun Huan couldn’t breathe.

Tian Qi’s face also looked worse and worse, also can’t seem to breathe. But he seemed unable to release his hands even in death.

Li Xun Huan only felt that everything became dark, that Tian Qi’s face became more and more distant. He knows he’s about to die.

In this situation, he thought he would think about a lot of things, because someone once told him that.

Yet he didn’t think about anything. No painful memories. Just something very funny. He almost laughed.

He never thought he’d die with Tian Qi. Looks like Tian Qi will accompany him on the road to the underworld.

Only to hear Tian Qi said, “Li Xun Huan. You really have a lot of breath. Why won’t you just die?”

Li Xun Huan originally wanted to say, “I’m waiting for you to die.”

But he can’t possibly say anything at this moment. He can’t even breathe.

Suddenly, he heard a loud noise, seemingly far, far away, but seemed to be from Tian Qi.

Then everything became bright again.

He saw Tian Qi.

Tian Qi has fallen in the carriage seat. His dead eyes still glaring at Li Xun Huan.

Looking at Xin Mei's irregular breathing, it seems he just used quite a bit of strength.

Li Xun Huan looked at him for a while, then asked, "Why did you save me?"

Xin Mei didn't respond. Instead he unsealed Li Xun Huan's pressure points. "Before Five Poison Kid comes, run away."

Li Xun Huan did not even move. "Why do you save me? Are you certain now that I'm not the Plum Flower Bandit?"

Xin Mei said, "Monks try not to have too much blood on their hand before death. No matter who you are, just go."

Li Xun Huan looked at his black face, then sighed. "Thank you. Unfortunately, I can do many things, but escaping is not one of them."

Xin Mei said in a hurry. "This isn't a time to be a hero. Your inner strength hasn't recovered yet. You can't beat him."

Suddenly the horse gasped. The driver yelled, and the carriage rammed into the tree.

Xin Mei lied on the side of the carriage, asking, "Why are you still here? Do you want to save me?"

Li Xun Huan said calmly, "If you can save me, why can't I save you?"

Xin Mei said, "But I'm not far from death. What does it matter when I die?"

Li Xun Huan said, "But you haven't died yet, right?"

He stopped talking. Instead simply took out a dagger.

A light, thin dagger.

A Little Li's Flying Dagger!

Li Xun Huan's lips seemed to be smiling.

The carriage lies on its side. The wheel kept spinning, making an annoying creaking sound. At this wild place, the sound is excruciating.

Li Xun Huan said calmly, "This wheel really needs some oil."

At this point, he actually thinks whether the wheel needs oil or not! Xin Mei found that this person is strange beyond belief.

He's lived for sixty years, but has never met someone like him.

This time Li Xun Huan carried him out of the carriage. The cold wind cut through their faces.

Xin Mei said, "You don't have to do this. Just... go."

There's no moon tonight. No matter how hard he tries, Xin Mei couldn't see a thing.

Only to hear Li Xun Huan yell, "Are you here, Five Poison Kid?"

No response.

Li Xun Huan said, "If you're not here, then we'll be leaving."

Xin Mei asked, "Where are we going?"

"Shaolin temple, of course."

Xin Mei was shocked. "Shaolin?"

Li Xun Huan said, "We spent all that effort just to get to Shaolin, remember?"

Xin Mei said, "But... but you don't have to go now."

Li Xun Huan said, "Actually, I must go there."

"Why?"

"Because only Shaolin has the antidote to your poison."

Xin Mei is bewildered. "Why save me? I'm your enemy."

Li Xun Huan said, "I save you, only because you're at least a human being."

Xin Mei sighed. "If we really do get to Shaolin, I'll tell everyone you're innocent. I know you can't be the Plum

Flower Bandit.”

Li Xun Huan just smiled. He didn’t say anything.

Xin Mei said, “Unfortunately, by carrying me, you’ll never reach Shaolin. Although Five Poison Kid has not shown himself, he’s not going to let you get away.”

Li Xun Huan coughed lightly.

Xin Mei said, “With your lightness kung fu, you might be able to leave alone. Why carry me? As long as you have this thought, I’m already very grateful.”

Only to hear someone laugh. “Wow. A reverend of the Shaolin actually became friend with a womanizing drunk Tan Hua. Who would believe this?”

The laughter seemed close one moment, far away the next. It’s impossible to tell where it’s from.

Xin Mei suddenly asked, “Five Poison Kid?”

That voice replied, “How’s that porridge? Tasty?”

Li Xun Huan said, “If you want me die, why don’t you come out and take it?”

Five Poison Kid said, “I don’t need to show myself to kill you.”

“Really?”

“Until today, I’ve killed three hundred and ninety two people. Not only did none of them ever see me, they couldn’t even see my shadow.”

Li Xun Huan smiled. "I was told that you're a midget, and so ugly you won't let anyone see you. Looks like it's true."

After a moment, he heard Five Poison Kid say, "I really owe it to you to keep you alive til tomorrow morning."

Li Xun Huan laughed. "Of course, I won't die before tomorrow morning. But I can't say the same for you, I'm afraid."

Before he stopped laughing, he heard a flute.

He suddenly saw many big and small shadows on the snow. He can't tell what they are. Whatever they are, he has to hold his breath.

Xin Mei said, "When five poison appears, people's bodies decay. If you don't leave now, when will you leave?"

Li Xun Huan acted as if he didn't hear anything. Then said, "I heard he has thousands of poisonous insects, how come I only see a few? Did the others all die?"

The flute noise became quicker. Some of those insects crawled onto their feet. Xin Mei almost threw up.

Only to hear Five Poison Kid laugh. "These are my special insects, combined from seven different poisons. Not only do they eat flesh, but afterwards, they'll even eat your bones." Before he finished, a dagger flashed!

Little Li's Flying Dagger has been released!

Xin Mei almost yelled out loud.

He knows that Li Xun Huan's dagger is their only hope. But Li Xun Huan can't even see his target.

If this dagger misses, they'll both die.

He's obviously gambling with their life here.

Their chances really are slim.

Xin Mei didn't think Li Xun Huan would take such a big risk.

At this moment, the dagger's glow disappeared into the darkness. But the darkness suddenly let out a short yet loud scream!

Then a person came out from the darkness.

This person looks like a little kid. He wears a short blouse, showing his little legs. Even in this winter condition, he doesn't seem cold.

His head is small, but his eyes are bright.

His eyes are filled with disbelief and anger, staring at Li Xun Huan. He wants to say something, but nothing will come out.

Xin Mei then noticed Little Li's Dagger on his throat. He couldn't help but pull out the dagger. When he did this, blood spilled out.

Five Poison Kid finally said, "What a venomous dagger."

By this time the insects on the has crawled onto Li Xun Huan and Xin Mei. But they can't even move.

Little Li's Dagger might have no equal in the world, but

they'll still probably be eaten.

Who'd have thought that when Five Poison Kid's blood spilled out, those insects suddenly shot over to his throat.

In a short time, his body disappeared. Yet after those insects ate him, they also stopped moving!

It really is fitting that Five Poison Kid would die by his own poison.

Xin Mei finally let out a sigh of relief. "Not only is your dagger without equal in this world, so is your composure."

Li Xun Huan smiled. "It's no big deal. I just figured these insects must follow human blood. Actually, I was quite scared too."

"You were actually scared?"

Li Xun Huan smiled. "Other than dead people, where can you find someone who's doesn't get scared?"

Xin Mei sighed. "You really are amazing."

His voice was weak, finally lied down.

It's morning.

Li Xun Huan sat by Xin Mei, already asleep.

When he woke up he found a horse carriage to take them to Mt. Song. They stopped at the base of the mountain before Li Xun Huan carried Xin Mei the rest of the way.

On his way up, he saw some monks gathering firewood. When they saw someone walking up the mountain with lightness kung fu, they took noticed.

One person asked, "Where are you from? Are you..."

Another one saw that he's carrying a monk, and asked, "Is that a Shaolin disciple on your back?"

Li Xun Huan originally was walking calmly, but when he saw these two monks, he suddenly flew high into the air over their heads, then kept on climbing.

By the time those monks could give chase, Li Xun Huan is already gone.

It still took him a couple of hours to reach Shaolin. He saw many pagodas big and small. He knows that this is the sacred Pagoda forest, where all past heads of Shaolin are buried.

This really isn't a good place for someone like him.

He suddenly started to cough.

Then he heard someone say, "Who dare enter the sacred land of Shaolin? You really are an arrogant person."

Li Xun Huan said, "Reverend Xin Mei is seriously injured. I brought him here so you can heal him. Please take me to your head reverend."

Suddenly many monks appeared. One asked, "My I ask for you name?"

Li Xun Huan sighed. "My name is Li Xun Huan."

Deep inside the bamboo forest, two people are playing Go(Wei Qi).

On the right is a strange looking old monk.

On the right is a skinny, short old man. His eyes are incredibly bright, charming, making people forget his height. He is definitely very charismatic.

Who other than Bai Xiao Sheng is worthy of playing Go with Reverend Xin Hu?

When these two play go, no one can stop them. But when they heard the words 'Li Xun Huan', they stopped.

Xin Hu asked, "Where is he?"

The monk who sent the message said, outside second martial uncle's room.

Xin Hu said, "What happened to your second martial uncle?"

That monk replied, "His injuries aren't serious. Fourth and sixth martial uncle are tending to him right now."

Li Xun Huan stood in the hall, looking at his surroundings.

He felt someone coming towards him. He didn't bother to look.

When they were ten steps away from Li Xun Huan, Xin Hu and Bai Xiao Sheng stopped. Although he knew Li Xun Huan by reputation, this is the first time Xin Hu has seen him.

He couldn't believe this person in front of him is the famous

wandering hero.

He looked all over his body, not missing any details.
Especially those skinny, long hands.

What's so special about these hands?

How come a regular dagger turns into a legend once it falls
into these hands?

Bai Xiao Sheng saw him ten years ago. He found that Li Xun Huan did not change much these ten years, and yet he seemed to have changed a lot.

Bai Xiao Sheng finally laughed. "How has it been, Mr. Tan Hua?"

Li Xun Huan also laughed. "I can't believe you still remember me."

Xin Hu said, "Yet I don't know if you recognize me."

Li Xun Huan said, "Who doesn't know reverend's good name? Your fame is widespread. I really am grateful to meet you today."

Xin Hu said, "Don't be so modest. Thank you for bringing my martial brother here."

Li Xun Huan said, "It's no matter."

Xin Hu said, "After I check on the condition of my martial brother, we'll resume chatting."

After he left, Bai Xiao Sheng smiled. "Monks really can hold their temper. I really couldn't have done the same thing."

“What do you mean?”

“If someone injured your students and martial brother, would you still be nice to him?”

Li Xun Huan said, “Are you implying that I injured Xin Mei and his students?”

Bai Xiao Sheng put his hands behind his back. “Other than Little Li Tan Hua, who else can hurt him?”

Li Xun Huan said, “If I injured him, why would I carry him here?”

Bai Xiao Sheng said, “See. This is why you’re so brilliant.”

“Really?”

“No matter who injures a reverend of Shaolin, he’s bound to forever have problems. The thousands of Shaolin disciples are bound to seek revenge.”

Li Xun Huan smiled. “Bai Xiao Sheng really does know everything. No wonder everyone in the martial world wants to be your friend. It really is a great thing to be your friend.”

Bai Xiao Sheng’s expression did not change. “I’m only saying the truth.”

Li Xun Huan said, “But you forgot one thing. Xin Mei is still alive. He obviously knows who hurt him. By that time, I’m afraid you’ll have to eat your words.”

Bai Xiao Sheng sighed. “If I calculate correctly, Xin Mei doesn’t have any chance to say more words.”

Suddenly he heard someone say, "If you didn't hurt Xin Mei, then who did?"

It's not clear when he got back, but his expression is very cold.

Li Xun Huan said, "You mean you can't tell he's been poisoned?"

Xin Hu did not respond. He turned around and said, "Seventh brother."

Only to see a yellow faced, ill-looking man, who said, "He was poisoned by Five Poison Kid's "Five Poison Water". This poison has no odor or taste. As colorless as water. If one does not immediately find the antidote, he'll rot and turn colorless."

Li Xun Huan laughed. "You really are amazing."

Xin Jian said coldly, "Yet I only know that the poison is Five Poison Water. I don't know who poisoned him."

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "That's correct. Although the poisoned person is dead, the culprit is still alive."

Xin Jian said, "Five Poison Kid has no grudge against Shaolin, why would he poison second brother?"

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Because he was trying to poison me."

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "This is strange. If he was trying to poison you, why are you still here? How come brother Xin Mei is dead?"

He stared at Li Xun Huan. "If you can explain this, then I really must bow down before you."

Li Xun Huan thought for a long time before smiling. "I can't. Because no matter what I say, you won't believe me."

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "You really do make it hard for us to believe you."

Li Xun Huan said, "I can't say it. But someone can."

Xin Hu asked, "Who?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Reverend Xin Mei. Why don't you ask him when he wakes up?"

Xin Jian said coldly, "Second brother will never wake up!"

Chapter 20: A Person's Heart is Hard to See

The temple bell kept ringing, this obviously to signal the death of their reverend.

In the cold winter winds, Li Xun Huan couldn't help coughing again, not knowing whether to be angry, regretful, or sad.

When he stopped coughing, he saw many monks enter this little yard. Everyone has a face full of ice.

Everyone stared at him, their mouths closed tightly. The bell stopped too, so there's absolutely no noise, except for the footsteps in the snow.

When the last footsteps stopped, Li Xun Huan felt he was covered by layers and layers of thick ice.

Xin Hu said, "Do you have anything more to say?"

Li Xun Huan thought for a long time. "No."

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "You shouldn't have come."

Li Xun Huan thought again for a while, then suddenly laughed. "Maybe I shouldn't have come, but if I can turn back time, I'd still come."

He calmly continued. "Although I've killed countless people in my life, I've never watched someone die without helping."

Xin Hu said angrily, "Even now you still try to claim innocence?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Monks are supposed to be emotionless. How could you get angry so easily?"

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "I heard Mr. Tan Hua is very knowledgeable, so how come you don't know that even Buddha himself sometimes have yelled loudly."

Li Xun Huan said, "In that case, go ahead and yell. Just try not to hurt your throat."

Xin Hu said loudly, "Even now, you still show no signs of regret. Looks like I might have to break the rule of no killing today."

Li Xun Huan said, "Go ahead. It's a good thing you're not the only monk who've killed!"

Xin Jian said, "We kill you not for revenge, but to kill an evil monster!"

Just then, he saw a glow of a dagger. He doesn't know when Li Xun Huan's hand suddenly held a dagger. Little Li's Flying Dagger!

Only to hear Li Xun Huan said, "I'm suggest you don't try to kill this evil monster, because you can't possibly beat me!"

Xin Hu said, "You mean even now you still want to put up a savage fight?"

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Although my life isn't easy, I'm still not ready to die."

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "Although your dagger never misses, but how many daggers do you have? How many can you kill?"

Li Xun Huan smiled, did not respond.

Xin Hu stared at Li Xun Huan's hands, then suddenly said, "Good. I'll test your legendary dagger today!"

He immediately moved.

But Bai Xiao Sheng held him back. "Reverend you can't possibly go!"

"Why?"

Bai Xiao Sheng sighed. "Because no one on this Earth can dodge his dagger for certain!"

"No one can dodge it?"

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "No one!"

Xin Hu let out a deep breath. "If I don't go to the underworld, then who will go to the underworld?"

Xin Jin also came over. "Brother, you must think of our temple. How could you put yourself in such danger?"

Li Xun Huan said, "He's right. None of you need to take this risk. You have so many disciples anyway. Just one word and they'll be willing to die for you."

Xin Hu's expression changed, then yelled, "Without my order, no one will move. Otherwise they'll be disciplined for disobedience. Understand?"

All the monks lowered their heads.

Li Xun Huan smiled. "Shaolin really is different from those ordinary, view-life-as-nothing sects. Otherwise, how could my little trick work so well?"

Bai Xiao Sheng said coldly, "Shaolin monks might not want his disciples to exchange life with you, but do you really think you can leave?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Who said I want to leave?"

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "You... you want to stay?"

Li Xun Huan said, "The truth has not yet been revealed. Why should I go now?"

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "You mean you can ask Five Poison Kid to come to Shaolin stating he was the culprit?"

Li Xun Huan said, "No, because he is dead."

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "You killed him?"

Li Xun Huan said calmly. "He's also a person. Therefore he also could not dodge my dagger!"

Xin Hu suddenly said, "If you can find his body, we can at least prove that you didn't lie about everything."

Li Xun Huan said, "Unfortunately, even if we find his body,

no one can tell that he's the Five Poison Kid."

Bai Xiao Sheng laughed coldly. "So can you find anyone who can prove your innocence?"

Li Xun Huan said, "As of right now? No."

"Then what do you propose to do?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I just want to drink wine right now."

Ah Fei did not look comfortable sitting on the chair. He can never sit as leisurely as Li Xun Huan in a chair. It seems that he's never really sat on a chair before in his life.

Lin Xian Er slept by the fireside, soaking up the heat.

These few days she did not really rest. Only when she was certain that Ah Fei had fully recovered did she sleep tightly.

Ah Fei looked at her quietly, almost staring like an idiot.

There's only her sound of breathing in the room. The snow outside has melted. Heaven and Earth filled with peace and warmth.

Ah Fei's eyes suddenly showed a touch of pain.

He suddenly stood up, put on his shoes quietly.

He quietly took a deep breath, then grabbed his sword.

Ah Fei quietly put his sword in his waist.

Suddenly Lin Xian Er said, "What are you... you doing?"

Ah Fei didn't dare to turn around, biting his teeth, he said, "I'm leaving!"

Lin Xian Er was taken aback. "Leaving?"

She stood up. "You're not even going to say goodbye? Just leave quietly like this?"

Ah Fei said, "Since I'm leaving, why bother saying goodbye?"

Lin Xian Er's body suddenly melted, falling on to the chair. Tears fell from her eyes.

Ah Fei's heart felt painful. He's never had this emotion before. Not resembling anything else he's encountered in his life.

Is this love?

Ah Fei said, "You saved me. I'll repay you sooner or later."

Lin Xian Er suddenly smiled. "Good. Then pay me back now. I only saved you so you can repay me."

She's laughing, but she's shedding even more tears now.

Ah Fei said, "I know what you're thinking. But I have to find Li Xun Huan."

Lin Xian Er said, "How come you're certain I don't want to find him either? Why not take me along?"

Ah Fei said, "I... I don't want to drag you into this."

Lin Xian Er said while crying, "But do you really think that if

you go, I'll be happy?"

Ah Fei wants to say something, but his lips are shaking.

Lin Xian Er grabbed around his waist, holding him tightly, as if holding on to her life. She said loudly, "Take me. Take me with you. If you don't take me, I'll die in front of you."

The night is quiet.

Ah Fei walked out the door. He was actually living in Lin Xian Er's room all this time. Funny, they've been searching everywhere for Ah Fei these past few days in this manor, yet no one came to her room.

Why do they trust her so?

Lin Xian Er grabbed Ah Fei's hands tightly. "I have to tell my sister that I'm leaving."

Ah Fei said, "Go ahead."

Lin Xian Er smiled, "But I don't want to leave you alone here. So we'll go together."

Ah Fei said, "But your sister..."

Lin Xian Er said, "Don't worry, my sister is also Li Xun Huan's friend."

The little house has only one candle upstairs.

Everything else in the room is asleep, but not the person.

Lin Shi Yin simply sat there, staring into the distance.

Lin Xian Er pulled Ah Fei quietly up the stairs. Then

whispered, "Big sister. Are you still awake?"

Lin Shi Yin still just sat there, not even bother to raise her head.

Lin Xian Er said, "Big sister. I came to tell you that I'm leaving. Don't worry, I'll never forget your kindness to me, so I'll certainly visit you in the future."

Lin Shi Yin appeared to not have heard. Only after a long time did she nod slowly. "Go. Leaving is good. There's nothing here left for you anyway."

Lin Xian Er asked, "Where's brother-in-law?"

Lin Shi Yin said, "Brother-in-law? Who's brother-in-law?"

Lin Xian Er said, "Obviously my brother-in-law."

Lin Shi Yin said, "I don't know anything about your brother-in-law. I don't know... I don't know."

Lin Xian Er didn't know what to say. After she got over the shock, she forced a smile. "We're taking a shortcut to the Shaolin temple!"

Lin Shi Yin suddenly jumped up, then said loudly, "Go now. Hurry...don't say anything else. Just go!"

She put up her hands and pushed Lin Xian Er and Ah Fei down the stairs. Then walked back to the candlelight. Tears fell down her eyes.

From the shadows came out a person. It's Long Xiao4 Yun.

He stared at Lin Shi Yin, a snicker came out of his mouth,

and said coldly, "It's useless even if they reach Shaolin. There's no one on Earth who can save Li Xun Huan."

Although Ah Fei eats a lot, he doesn't eat very fast.

He doesn't eat like Li Xun Huan, who enjoys savoring the tastes of food. Ah Fei only care for the nutrition and the amount of his food.

Every time he finishes eating, he has no idea when his next meal will come. So he never wastes any food.

Lin Xian Er simply stared at him sweetly.

She's never seen anyone who respects food so much, because only a person who constantly goes hungry can value food so much.

Lin Xian Er smiled. "Are you full?"

Ah Fei said, "Very full!"

Lin Xian Er said with a laugh, "It's so interesting watching you eat. You eat more food for one meal than I do in three days."

Ah Fei also laughed. "But I can go three days without eating. Can you?"

Lin Xian Er looked at his smile, not knowing what to say.

After a long time, she suddenly said, "You forgot something."

"What's that?"

“I have your Golden Thread Vest.”

She opened her bag and took out the vest.

Lin Xian Er said, “In order to treat your wound, I had to take it off. I keep forgetting to return it to you.”

Ah Fei didn’t even look at the vest. “Just keep it.”

Lin Xian Er’s face showed much happiness, but she shook her head. “This is yours. You’ll need it later anyway, so how can you give it to someone else so easily?”

Ah Fei looked at her. His voice suddenly became warm. “But I’m not giving it to someone else. I will never give it to someone else. I’m giving it to you.”

Lin Xian Er stared at him blankly, her eyes filled with gratitude and joy, then fell into his embrace.

Ah Fei’s heart started to beat rapidly.

He’s never felt this way before.

Lin Xian Er smiled secretly.

Because she knew she now has the heart of this strong, proud young man, who will now forever follow her wishes.

Ah Fei picked her up and carried her over to her bed. Then gently put the bed sheets over her. In his heart, she is perfect.

Lin Xian Er simply lied on the bed, still smiling secretly.

Suddenly, the window opened, cold wind blew in. Lin Xian Er sat up. "Who is it?"

As she said those words, she saw that person's face. The face gave off a green glitter, looking like a ghost in the darkness.

Lin Xian Er lied down again. She did not gasp or faint, but simply looked at him silently, showing no hint of shock.

This person is also looking at her, his eyes like burning fire.

Lin Xian Er laughed. "Since you're already here, why don't you come in?"

This person is very tall, his face and neck both very long. But there's bandage over his neck, making him look very stiff.

Lin Xian Er said, "Did Li Xun Huan hurt you?"

This person's expression changed. "How do you know?"

Lin Xian Er sighed. "I originally thought you could kill him. Who'd have thought he injured you instead."

This person's face became greener. "How do you know I would try to kill him?"

Lin Xian Er said, "Because he killed Qiu Du. Qiu du is your bastard son."

Yi Ku stared at her intently. "I also recognize you."

Lin Xian Er said calmly, "Really? I feel honored."

Yi Ku said, "When Qiu Du died, his Green Devil Hand had

disappeared.”

Lin Xian Er said. “It indeed disappeared.”

Yi Ku said, “He gave it to you?”

Lin Xian Er said, “It seems so.”

Yi Ku became furious. “If he hadn’t give you his Green Devil Hand, then how could he have died in Li Xun Huan’s hands?”

Lin Xian Er said, “You didn’t give me your Green Devil Hand. Yet you were still injured by Li Xun Huan, right?”

Yi Ku bit his teeth, suddenly grabbed her hair.

Lin Xian Er not only did not get scared, she actually smiled even more sweetly. She said gently, “He was happy to die for me. He thinks it’s worth it.”

The candlelight brushed over her face. Yi Ku’s mouth showed a tight smile. “I’m interested to see if you’re really worth it.”

Suddenly he threw away the sheets covering her.

Lin Xian Er kept smiling. “Why don’t you see if I’m worth it?”

Yi Ku suddenly slapped her hard on the face, then held her body tightly.

Yi Ku then hit her in the stomach, and yelled, “****. So you like to get hit.”

Lin Xian Er didn’t show any signs of pain.

Yi Ku said, “You’re not afraid of me?”

Lin Xian Er said, “Why should I be afraid of you? Although you’re incredibly ugly, you’re still a man.”

Chapter 21: A Friend to be Proud Of

Yi Ku stood by the bed, putting on his clothes.

After a long time, Lin Xian Er suddenly smiled at him. "Now you understand that I'm worth it, right?"

Yi Ku said, "I really should kill you. Otherwise I don't know how many people would die in your hands."

Lin Xian Er said, "You originally did plan to kill me."

"Humph."

She smiled sweetly. "But can you really bring yourself to kill me?"

Yi Ku stared at her again, then asked, "Who's that kid who came with you?"

Lin Xian Er laughed. "Why do you ask? Jealous? Or afraid?" She rolled her eyes. "He's a good boy, not nearly as bad as you. He already went to sleep in his room. Had he heard this room's sound, you'd never have the chance to bully me."

Yi Ku laughed coldly. "He's lucky he couldn't hear me."

Lin Xian Er said, "Really? You really want to kill him?"

“Yes.”

Lin Xian Er smiled. “But you can’t kill him. His fighting skills are very good, and he’s Li Xun Huan’s friend. I also like him a lot.”

Yi Ku’s face changed.

Lin Xian Er said, “His room is the last one down the hall. Do you really have the guts to see him?”

Before she finished, Yi Ku had left.

She began to laugh, then covered herself in bed. She feels like a little girl who just ate some candy in secret, but didn’t get caught by her parents.

When she thought about how Yi Ku’s Green Devil Hand rips Ah Fei’s head off, her eyes glowed. When she thought about Ah Fei’s sword in Yi Ku’s throat, she got uncontrollably excited.

As she thought those things, she fell asleep. Even in sleep she smiled, because no matter who dies, she’d still be very happy.

She’s very pleased with what has happened tonight.

The bed is very soft. The sheets are very clean. Yet Ah Fei couldn’t sleep. He’s never had trouble falling asleep before.

After a long time, he finally fell asleep, yet suddenly, for no reason, he jump up from his bed.

Just as he put the sword in his waist, the window opened.

He saw a pair of eyes scarier than a ghost's.

Yi Ku said, "You came with Lin Xian Er?"

Ah Fei said, "Yes."

"Good. Come out."

Ah Fei did not respond. He doesn't like to speak, doesn't like to start a conversation.

Yi Ku said, "I am going to kill you."

Yet Ah Fei instead said, "But I don't want to kill anyone today. You can leave."

Yi Ku said, "I didn't want to kill anyone today either. Just you."

"Really?"

"You really shouldn't have came today with Lin Xian Er."

Ah Fei's eyes suddenly shot out a flash that's as sharp as a dagger. "If you say her name again, I'll have to kill you."

Yi Ku chuckled. "Why?"

"Because you're not worthy."

Yi Ku couldn't help but burst out laughing. "Not only am I going to say her name, I'm also going to sleep with her. What are you going to do about it?"

Ah Fei's whole face began to burn.

He used to be a very cool and patient person. He's never been angry like this.

His hands started to shake.

In his fury, his sword came out.

The Green Devil Hand also shot out!

Only to hear a clang, the sword broke.

Yi Ku laughed. "You would dare fight me with this crappy kung fu? Lin Xian Er actually said your kung fu was pretty good."

While he said this, he already made ten moves.

Ah Fei almost couldn't block them. He only has a broken sword, and had to rely on his quickness to dodge Yi Ku.

Yi Ku laughed even harder. "If you can truthfully answer two questions, I'll spare your life."

Ah Fei bit his teeth, sweat poured down.

Yi Ku said, "Does Lin Xian Er sleep with men regularly? Have you slept with her?"

Ah Fei could only roll on the floor to evade Yi Ku's attacks. He's already fully exhausted.

Yi Ku said, "Come on. Just tell me, and I'll spare your life."

Ah Fei said, "I... I'll tell you!"

At this time Yi Ku laughed again, his attack slowed down a bit, suddenly a sword flashed.

Yi Ku has never seen such a fast sword. By the time he saw it, the sword is already in this throat. His face full of disbelief.

Even as he died he didn't know where this sword came from.

Even in death he could not believe this youngster has such a fast sword!

Ah Fei's expression is cold as ice. Then he said, one word at a time, "Who insults her, who dies!"

Yi Ku's throat still just make a coughing noise. He raised his eyebrows, because he wants to laugh, wants to tell Ah Fei, "Sooner or later you'll also die in her hands."

Unfortunately, he couldn't say a single word.

When Lin Xian woke up, she saw a shadow outside the window. That shadow kept pacing outside. She knows that this person is Ah Fei, although wanting to come in, but don't want to wake her.

If it's Yi Ku, then he wouldn't be outside right now.

She happily stayed on the bed, allowing Ah Fei to wait for a long time, then said, "Is that you outside, Little Fei?"

Ah Fei's shadow stopped. "It's me."

Lin Xian Er said, "Why don't you come in?"

Ah Fei pushed the door lightly, which immediately opened. He then said, "You didn't lock your door?"

Ah Fei suddenly rushed over her side, staring at her face. Her face looks a bit pale, a bit green. Ah Fei's expression changed. "Something... something happened to you?"

Lin Xian Er said, "My face would look pale if I don't sleep well. Last night I kept tossing and turning, unable to sleep."

Ah Fei's whole heart melted.

Lin Xian Er asked, "What about you? Did you sleep well?"

Ah Fei said. "No. There was a mad dog yelling outside."

Lin Xian Er blinked her eyes. "Mad dog?"

Ah Fei said, "Yes. I already killed it, then threw it in the lake."

Suddenly, the sound of drums entered the room. Ah Fei opened the window, seeing a hotel worker beating the drums outside. "Dear guests, do you want to hear the most refreshing news around? The most breathtaking news of the martial world? I guarantee it's fresh and exciting. Plus, you can wine and dine while listening."

Ah Fei closed the window, shaking his head.

Lin Xian Er said, "You don't want to hear this?"

"No."

Lin Xian Er said, "But I do. Besides, we have to eat anyway."

Ah Fei smiled. "Looks like this guy knows how to get

business.”

Lin Xian Er threw away her bed sheets, about to stand up, then immediately put the sheets over herself again, her face all red. “You’re still not going to give me my clothes?”

Ah Fei’s face also glowed red. His heart kept on beating fast.

The restaurant is nearly full. Tales of the martial world is always exciting, so everyone wants to hear them.

When they hear these stories, people can’t help but feel like they’re part of the story.

On the seat by the window is an old man wearing blue cotton cloth, smoking a pipe with his eyes closed.

By his side is a very young big girl. She has two long pony-tails, a pair of eyes big and bright, when it rolls, it seemingly snatches the souls of men.

As Ah Fei and Lin Xian Er entered the room, their eyes brightened. This pony-tailed girl’s big eyes was staring at them.

Lin Xian Er also stared at this big girl, then smiled. She whispered, “Did you see those eyes? I better watch out, so she won’t snatch you away.”

Just as they ordered some food, the old man coughed a bit, then said, “Hong Er, is it time?”

Pony-tailed girl answered, “It’s time.”

At this time the old man opened his eyes.

Although he is incredibly old, he still has much energy, especially in those eyes.

The old man blew into his teacup and drank some tea. Then he suddenly said, “The Plum Flower Bandit only does evil, the Scholar Tan Hua is honorable and talented.”

He looked at the audience. “Do you all know who I’m talking about?”

The Pony-tailed girl said, “Who are these people? I’ve never even heard of them.”

Old Man Sun chuckled. “Then you must not be very knowledgeable. These two people are both very famous. The Plum Flower Bandit has appeared only twice in the past thirty years. Yet the thousands of regular bandits combined could not commit as many crimes as he did.”

The Pony-tailed girl smiled. “So what about this Tan Hua?”

Old Man Sun said, “He is the son of a big official. His family is amazing, in three generations seven family members passed the imperial examination. Only no one managed to make Zhuan Yuan*. By his generation, the two brothers are even more talented than their elders. So their father was really hopeful that one of them could become a Zhuan Yuan.”

*[Zhuan Yuan is the title for getting first place in the imperial examination. Tan Hua, as I’ve mentioned earlier, is third. The title for the second place escapes me at this moment, though.]

The Pony-tailed girl said with a smile. “Tan Hua is already quite excellent. Why is becoming a Zhuan Yuan so

important?”

Old Man Sun said, “Who’d have thought that when the first young master took the examination, he was again a Tan Hua. Everyone in the family was feeling gloomy. And all hope rested on the little young master of the Li family.

Unfortunately, fate was cruel to the family. The second son also only received a Tan Hua. Their father, with much regret and sadness, passed away in two years. The elder Li Tan Hua also caught an incurable illness and died a little later. This little Li Tan Hua’s heart died with them, resigning from his post and retired.”

When he got here, he took another sip of the tea.

Ah Fei was already mesmerized by this story. He feels happier when people praise Li Xun Huan even more than when they praise him. Only to hear the old man continue, “This person not only is an amazing scholar, but also skilled at the martial arts. He was taught a very powerful kung fu when he was a kid.

The pony-tailed girl said, “So is the story you’re telling today about these two people?”

The old man said, “That’s correct.”

The pony-tailed girl said, “Then it really must be exciting. Except... except how can a Tan Hua possibly get mixed up with a criminal like the Plum Flower Bandit?”

The old man said, “Obviously for a reason.”

“What reason?”

Old Man Sun said, “Because Li Xun Huan is the Plum Flower

Bandit. The Plum Flower Bandit is Li Xun Huan.”

Ah Fei immediately became angry, wanting to say something, yet the pony-tailed girl simply shook her head. “This Mr. Tan Hua must be incredibly wealthy. Why would he possibly be a bandit and a rapist? That makes no sense. I don’t believe this.”

Old Man Sun said, “Not just you. I don’t believe it either. So I looked into the matter.”

The pony-tailed girl said, “You must’ve found something, right?”

Old Man Sun said, “Of course. This story is complicated, exciting and very strange...” When he got here, he suddenly stopped talking, closed his eyes and began sleeping.

The pony-tailed girl acted like she’s very impatient and began to pester her grandpa. “Why did you stop?”

Old Man Sun simply blew into his pipe.

The pony-tailed girl smiled. “You really know how to draw an audience. Stopping just when you’re getting to the good part.”

Her face suddenly brightened. “Oh... I get it now. You want to drink wine.”

At this point, not only did she understand, but so does everyone else in the restaurant. People started to reach into their pockets looking for money, while a waiter began to go around collecting tips.

Only now did this old man talk again. "It all started at Happy Cloud Manor."

Pony-tailed girl cut in. "Happy Cloud Manor? Isn't that Fourth Master Long's home? That's a really nice place."

Old Man Sun said, "Of course. But this nice place was given to him by Li Xun Huan. Because they're sworn brothers, and his wife is a cousin of Li Xun Huan."

These two people continued to chatter with each other. Amazingly enough, they were able to pretty much tell the whole story. When he got to the part about how Li Xun Huan accidentally hurt Long Xiao Yun, and then got caught, the audience sighed. When he got to how Lin Xian Er was captured, how fast the youngster Ah Fei's sword is, his eyes seemed to wander towards Ah Fei and Lin Xian Er. The pony-tailed girl's pair of big eyes also tend to glance at their table from time to time.

Although he didn't show it, Ah Fei couldn't help but feel that these two people know who they are. Could they be telling this story just for them?"

Only to hear the pony-tailed girl say, "If that's the case, then didn't the Plum Flower Bandit die at the hands of Ah Fei?"

Old Man Sun said, "Because Master Zhao, Seventh Master Tian didn't believe that he killed the real Plum Flower Bandit. They say Li Xun Huan is the real Plum Flower Bandit."

The pony-tailed girl said, "So just who is really the Plum Flower Bandit?"

Old Man Sun said, "No one has seen the face of the real

Plum Flower Bandit. No one knows who's right and who's wrong. Yet people like Master Zhao and Seventh Master Tian are respected people. Their words are facts. As long as they say Li Xun Huan is the real Plum Flower Bandit, who's going to argue? Therefore, Reverend Xin Mei decided to take him to Shaolin Temple for a trial."

He smoked his pipe again, then continued. "Yet when they reached Shaolin Temple, it was actually Li Xun Huan who took Reverend Xin Mei there!"

When he said this, even Lin Xian Er was shocked. Ah Fei was shocked even more. Both started to wonder just what happened on the trip.

Thankfully, the pony-tailed girl helped them ask the old man.

Old Man Sun said, "It turns out that they were ambushed by the Five Poison Kid on the road, killing Seventh Master Tian and four Shaolin disciples. Reverend Xin Mei then decided to release Li Xun Huan after getting poisoned. Li Xun Huan, seeing that only Shaolin has the necessary antidote for Xin Mei's poison, carried him back to Shaolin."

Pony-tailed girl gave a thumbs up. "This Li Tan Hua really is a heroic person. If it were someone else under the same circumstances, he would've definitely fled."

Old Man Sun said, "You're most correct. Unfortunately, the monks at Shaolin not only did not thank him, they want to kill him."

The Pig-tailed girl asked shockingly,. "Why?"

Old Man Sun said. "Because this story came from Li Tan Hua himself. The monks at Shaolin don't believe a thing he said."

The Pig-tailed girl then said, "But... but Reverend Xin Mei can vouch for him."

Old Man Sun laughed. "Except Reverend Xin Mei died soon after reaching Shaolin. Other than Xin Mei, no one else on this Earth knows the truth!"

When he said this, sighs came from all over the restaurant.

Ah Fei is almost ready to explode, and can't help but ask, "So has that Mr. Li been executed yet?"

Old Man Sun's eyes glittered. "Although Shaolin is incredibly famous and is filled with top-ranked fighters, it's still pretty hard for them to kill Li Xun Huan."

The Pig-tailed girl also glanced at Ah Fei. "Yet when it comes to fighting, even the best cannot handle attacks by many enemies. Li Tan Hua's flying dagger might be unrivaled in the martial world, but he still can't beat all the Shaolin disciples."

Old Man Sun said, "Although Shaolin has many disciples, each an expert in fighting, who would possibly attack first? Who'd dare challenge the first dagger of Li Xun Huan?"

The Pig-tailed girl immediately became excited, clapping her hand. "You're right. The legendary dagger of Little Li never misses. No one would dare to approach him. So I'm guessing he's long gone by now."

Old Man Sun said, "But he didn't go."

“Why?”

Old Man Sun replied, “Although no one at Shaolin would approach him, Li Xun Huan also can’t find a way to escape either. Besides, with the situation still unresolved, he can’t leave.”

The Pig-tailed girl said, “If he can’t go and can’t fight. Then what can he do?”

Old Man Sun said, “As he’s surrounded by hundreds of Shaolin monks, he knows that once he releases the dagger, he’ll die. After all, one dagger can’t possibly kill hundreds of people.”

The Pig-tailed girl said, “Then this is a problem for him. A person can’t possibly hold out forever.”

This just so happen to be what Ah Fei was worried about. He doesn’t know what to do either.

Old Man Sun said, “When they were having this conversation, it was just outside the room where they’re holding Reverend Xin Mei’s funeral. So Li Xun Huan sneaked into the room right away afterwards.”

The Pig-tailed girl let out a gasp. “So he basically trapped himself?”

Old Man Sun said. “The Shaolin monks also thought that he’d try to escape. That’s why they’re really regretting it now.”

“Why’s that? Should they be happy Li Tan Hua trapped himself?”

Old Man Sun continued, “Not only was the body of Xin Mei in the room, but so are countless scriptures very important to Shaolin.”

The Pig-tailed girl then said, “Yet they only have to wait a few days outside. Then Li Xun Huan will simply die of hunger and thirst.”

Old Man Sun said, “They’re thinking the same thing, of course. Unfortunately, Li Xun Huan also trapped Reverend Xin Shu in the room with him. They can’t possibly let Xin Shu die with Li Xun Huan.”

“Of course not.”

“Therefore, they have to bring food and water inside everyday, so neither Xin Shu nor Li Xun Huan dies.”

The Pig-tailed girl clapped her hands and smiled. “Shaolin has long been considered the sacred ground of the martial world. No one in hundreds of years had ever tried to do anything inappropriate there. Yet Li Xun Huan alone has turned the place upside down. Not only can the monks not do anything to him, they also have to feed him everyday. That’s just hilarious.”

She’s full of giddy now. “This Li Tan Hua really is some character. Your story is awesome, grandpa.”

At this point, Ah Fei’s just overwhelmed with joy. He had to restrain himself from yelling to everyone in the room that Li Xun Huan is his good friend.

Yet Old Man Sun only let out a sigh. “You’re right. However, he’s still going to be buried in Shaolin sooner or later.”

The Pig-tailed girl asked, "Why?"

Old Man Sun seemingly glanced at Ah Fei. "Unless someone can prove that Li Xun Huan is not the Plum Flower Bandit, that Reverend Xin Mei really was killed by the Five-Poison kid, there's no way Shaolin would let him go!"

The Pig-tailed girl asked, "Then who can prove this?"

Old Man Sun was silent for a moment, then said, "Unfortunately, absolutely no one!"

Chapter 22: The Plum Flower Bandit Reappears

The lunch is over, the story is over, the people are leaving, as they left, everyone talked about the predicament Li Xun Huan's in.

Lin Xian Er kept looking at Ah Fei, who's deep in thought. None of the dishes on their table was touched.

After a while, the Pig-tailed girl put down her chopsticks and asked, "Grandpa, do you think Li Tan Hua is innocent?"

Old Man Sun said, "Even if I know he's innocent, what can I do?"

The Pig-tailed girl said, "But what about his friends? Are none of them willing to help him either?"

Old Man Sun said, "If he were trapped elsewhere, then maybe someone would try to save him. But he's trapped at the Shaolin Temple. So I'm afraid no one can save him."

The Pig-tailed girl said, "So he's just going to die at Shaolin?"

Old Man Sun thought for a long time, then said, "There certainly is a way, except the chance of success is very small."

When he heard this, Ah Fei's eyes brightened.

The Pig-tailed girl asked, "What is it?"

Old Man Sun said, "If the real Plum Flower Bandit is still alive, and reappear, then Li Xun Huan is obviously absolved of all guilt. If he's not the Plum Flower Bandit, then he'd have no reason to kill Reverend Xin Mei."

The Pig-tailed girl sighed. "This possibility really is slim. Even if the Plum Flower Bandit is still alive, he obviously is hiding right now, waiting for them execute Li Xun Huan."

Old Man Sun put his smoking pipe on the table. "Are you finished with your noodles?"

The Pig-tailed girl said, "I was pretty hungry. But after hearing this story, I can't eat anything now."

Old Man Sun said, "In that case, let's go. We can't save Li Tan Hua by sitting here anyway."

As the Pig-tailed girl walked to the door, she glanced at Ah Fei again, as if saying, "If you just sit here, then how can you save him?"

After Lin Xian Er saw them leave, she chuckled coldly. "What kind of people do you think these two people are?"

"What kind?"

Lin Xian Er said, "Based on his look, the old man's inner strength is very high. That little girl's steps are light and quick. Her lightness kung fu is at least as good as mine."

“Really?”

“In my opinion, they’re definitely not normal storytellers. They must have another reason for coming here.”

Lin Xian Er continued, “They purposely tell this story to you, so you can go commit suicide.”

“Suicide?”

Lin Xian Er sighed. “If you knew that Li Xun Huan is trapped at Shaolin, then you’d obviously try to save him. Yet how can you possibly take on the entire Shaolin Temple?”

Ah Fei is still deep in thought, not responding.

Lin Xian Er said, “Besides, they might be lying. So you’ll get tricked.”

She suddenly held Ah Fei’s hand, then said sweetly, “Even if they’re telling the truth, that Li Xun Huan really is in trouble, if you go, you’ll only break Li Xun Huan’s concentration. If those monks caught you, then he’d try to save you. So you’d be hurting him instead of helping.”

After some more thinking, Ah Fei said, “You’re right.”

Lin Xian Er said, “So you promise me you won’t go to Shaolin?”

“Yes.”

From the speed of his response, Lin Xian Er couldn’t help but question his honesty of the answer.

When the two people got back to the hotel room, Ah Fei

said, "Since we're not going to Shaolin, you should go back."

"What about you?"

Ah Fei responded, "I... I want to take a walk outside."

Lin Xian Er suddenly grabbed his hand, her voice shaking.
"Are you going to pretend to be the Plum Flower Bandit?"

Ah Fei stared at the floor for a long time, then after a long sigh, said, "Yes."

This 'Yes' came out very strong, as if nothing can change his mind.

Lin Xian Er said, "Then... then why do you ask me to go back?"

Ah Fei said, "Because this is my problem."

Lin Xian Er said, "You're problem is my problem."

Ah Fei said, "But Li Xun Huan is not your friend."

Lin Xian Er responded, "Your friend is my friend."

Ah Fei's face is now filled with gratitude, yet he did not speak.

Lin Xian Er said, "Since you value friendship so much, then why can't I? Although I'm useless, but at least I can provide emotional support."

Ah Fei suddenly held her hand tightly, still cannot speak, but his eyes, his expression, already spoke for him.

His silence spoke louder than any words can.

Lin Xian Er smiled sweetly. “If you’re going to pretend to be the Plum Flower Bandit, then you’ll need someone to rob.”

“You’re right.”

Lin Xian Er said, “It can’t be anybody, right?”

Ah Fei said, “Obviously, we need to find a rich family who’s money was ill-gotten.”

Lin Xian Er’s eyes rolled. “I have just the person.”

“Who?”

Lin Xian Er said, “This person used to be a bandit. He stopped after when he turned fifty or so, but he still does some dirty dealings.”

Ah Fei said, “Do you know his name?”

Lin Xian Er thought for a moment, then said, “I remember that it’s Zhang Sheng Qi, but now he’s called Zhang Yuan Wai, Zhang Da Shan*.”

*Note: Da Shan literally translates into ‘big kindness’.

Ah Fei raised his eyebrows. “A big kind guy?”

Lin Xian Er said, “He’ll steal ten thousand taels of silver, then spend a hundred to fix roads. At night he’d kill a hundred people, but in the daytime he’d help the sick.

It’s incredibly easy for bandits to become a kind person.”

Zhang Sheng Qi lies on his sofa, looking at the pot over the fire, brewing bird soup.

It's snowing outside again, but inside it's warm as the Spring.

He closed his eyes, wanting to take a nap. Suddenly, he heard a noise, as the pot rolled over and broke.

Shocked, he opened his eyes, a man in black appeared in front of him. No one knows where he came from.

Although Zhang Sheng Qi has retired for a while now, his kung fu is still in top shape, yelling loudly, "Pathetic little robber. How dare you come to my place!"

As he spoke, he got into fighting position, about to attack this man in black.

At this moment, a light appeared in front of him.

Zhang Sheng Qi did not see where it came from, or even what kind of weapon he used. Only that five blood marks appeared on his chest.

The Plum Flower Bandit has reappeared!

At tea parlors, bars, everyone talked about this among themselves.

Could it be that the killer of Zhang Sheng Qi is the real Plum Flower Bandit?

Who's his next target?

The rich people no longer could sleep again.

At dusk, a bell sounded in the monastery, monks with

serious and cold faces one by one appeared in the room.

Their footsteps seemingly even lighter than usual, because for the past few days, their minds have been quite occupied.

On the top of Mt. Song*, the cold is even more brutal, snow fills the whole mountain, as a person walking up in a hurry. It's one of Shaolin's non-monk disciples, 'The Hero of Nan Yang* Xiao Jing'.

*Note: Mt. Song is the mountain where Shaolin's located. Nan Yang's a city, but I have no idea where.

Xiao Jing's footsteps are also light, not making a noise as he touches the ground, yet just as he entered the courtyard, Reverend Xin Hu in the abbot's room yelled, "Who is it?"

Xiao Jing stopped outside, bent over, and said, "Student Xiao Jing, I have something to report."

There are only three people in the abbot's room. Xin Hu, Xin Jian, and Bai Xiao Sheng.

Xiao Jin doesn't dare to say too much useless stuffs. As he entered the room, he bowed again and said, "The Plum Flower Bandit has reappeared!"

Xiao Jing continued, "Three days ago, the former bandit Zhang Sheng Qi was suddenly killed, his valuables stolen. The only marks on his body is are blood marks of a plum on his chest."

Xin Jian and Bai Xiao Sheng looked at each other, both looked extremely pale.

After who knows how long, Xian Hu sighed. "Now that the Plum Flower Bandit has reappeared, maybe Li Xun Huan wasn't lying after all."

Bai Xiao Sheng looked at Xin Jian, did not speak.

Xin Jian walked slowly to the window, looking at the snow outside. "But this might also proved that Li Xun Huan IS the Plum Flower Bandit!"

Xin Hu said, "Please explain."

Xin Jian said, "If I were the Plum Flower Bandit, knowing someone is going to die for me, I'd stay low for a while. Otherwise, wouldn't I have just saved Li Xun Huan?"

Bai Xiao Sheng nodded. "You're right. The only reason for the Plum Flower Bandit to appear now is to clear Li Xun Huan of all crimes. If I were the Plum Flower Bandit, I would also never do this."

Xin Hu said, "In that case, what are your suggestions?"

Xin Jian said, "If Li Xun Huan isn't the real Plum Flower Bandit, then his associates wouldn't be doing this for him."

Xin Hu also stood up and walked over to the window. "Who's guarding Li Xun Huan right now?"

Xin Jian said, "It's second brother's students Yi Rui and Yi Chen."

Xin Hu said, "Tell them to come here."

When Yi Rui and Yi Chen got in the room, he didn't turn around, only asked, "Did you send your fifth uncle his dinner?"

Yi Rui said, "Yes. But..."

Xin Hu asked, "But what?"

Yi Rui said, "I followed the directions and put the food at the door. The quantity is the same as yesterday's, twice as much as normal and another cup of water."

Yi Chen added, "I carried the food basket, because I wanted to see what's going on inside, as I stepped back a bit, I saw Li Xun Huan take the basket, looked at it, and threw it back out again."

"Why?"

Yi Rui answered, "Because he said the food's terrible, there's no wine, so he wouldn't eat."

Xin Hu's filled with rage. "Where does he think he is? A restaurant?"

Yi Rui and Yi Chen had been in the monastery for over ten years now. Never have they seen the abbot* actually getting mad before. The two didn't dare to look up."

*Note: I don't think I've ever mentioned that Xin Hu is the abbot of Shaolin. It's rarely mentioned(he's mainly referred as reverend) in the book. But in the few instances it was mentioned, I sort of fudged on my translation because I didn't know what the head of a monastery is suppose to be called. Hehehe. ^ _ ^

After a long time, when he calmed down, Xin Hu asked, "What does he want to eat then?"

Yi Rui said, "He wrote a list and threw it out, and told us to follow his cooking directions. Any mistake and he'll throw it out again."

The list said:

Red Steamed Winter Bamboo
Mixed Vegetables Pot
Sour Vegetables with Mushrooms
Cooked Centerless Vegetable
To Fu with Mushrooms and Baby Bamboo

*Note: The above translation could anywhere be right on the money to totally off(I'd bet on the latter). I don't even know how these dishes are cooked even in Chinese. And some of these vegetables probably don't even have an English name. O_O

In addition to the 4 dishes and one soup, he also wanted 1.5 kg of high quality Zhu Ye Qing(type of wine), as if Shaolin temple is a high quality Capital City vegetarian restaurant.

No matter who sees this list wouldn't know whether to laugh or cry. But Xin Hu simply said calmly, "Just do as he says."

Xin Jian immediately said, "Big brother you..."

Xin Hu cut him off, "If Li Xun Huan doesn't eat, neither can fifth brother. His health has been deteriorating the past year or so. He doesn't have the stamina to go without food for too long."

Xin Jian looked at the floor. "But if we do this, then wouldn't it prove that Li Xun Huan is controlling us?"

Xin Hu's eyes sparkled. "I already have a plan. So who cares if he gets his way for a couple of days."

Ah Fei lied on the bed.

It's been four hours. He just lied there, not moving, as if his whole body turned into a stone."

He simply waits.

Because by not moving, he can save his energy. He needs energy to get food, and need food to survive, to combat nature.

Several times, even the most cunning wild rabbits thought he was just a stone. Once, he was so weak and hungry he had no energy left. If that wild rabbits didn't jump on top of him, he might've died of hunger.

Another time he played dead for two days before a wild dog came to him.

This type of patience and endurance is not a natural talent, it came only after countless practice.

At first, he's not very good at it. He can't help but shrivel himself up. But now, he doesn't feel anything anymore. As long as he feels that there's no need to move, he won't move an inch.

When Lin Xian Er came back, she thought he's already asleep.

Her clothing today is quite strange, a plain grey cloth, covering all parts of her body.

She went to get some information, and had gone for four hours.

As Ah Fei suddenly sat up, which really scared her. But then she smiled, "So you're just pretending to be asleep, wanting to scare me?"

Li Xian Er combed her hair, then bit her lips. "You don't like me?"

Ah Fei shook his head.

Lin Xian Er innocently looked at him, then went over and kissed his cheeks. "You're so good."

Ah Fei stood up, and asked, "You have news?"

She shook her head. "Shaolin has always been very cautious on matters. They must observe for a long time before taking action. They'd rather not do something than to do something wrong."

Ah Fei said, "But it's been six days."

Lin Xian Er said, "Maybe they don't believe that the Plum Flower Bandit killed Zhang Sheng Qi, because the Plum Flower Bandit always does a string of crimes, not just one at a time."

Ah Fei thought for a long time, then said, "But they'll have to believe sooner or later. I'll make them believe."

Lin Xian Er said, "Come with me. I'll show you a place."

"Where?"

“Your second victim.”

It's nighttime. The snow has melted. Their clothing has been changed, so no one noticed them.

Lin Xian Er suddenly pointed at the sign of a pawn shop. This is a big pawn shop, with a big sign that says 'Shen Ji Pawn Shop'.

Ah Fei said, “What's so special about this sign?”

Lin Xian Er did not respond, only pointed at another sign on a restaurant. “Look at this one.”

This restaurant's business is very good. Both floors are full of customers. The sign says 'Sheng Ji Restaurant'.

Actually, every five or six shops on this street seems to have the 'Shen Ji' name. And they all seem to have great business.

Lin Xian Er said, “All these are opened by Third Brother Shen.”

Ah Fei said, “Now where are we going?”

Lin Xian Er said, “Just follow me.”

Ah Fei doesn't like to ask too many questions anyway, so he didn't ask her to explain.

As they walked, she suddenly pointed to the sky. “Look, a shooting star.”

Ah Fei stayed silent for a while, then asked, “Did you make a

wish?”

Lin Xian Er said, “A shooting star always passes by too quickly. No one has enough time to make a wish, unless he knows that the shooting star will appear. But who could know that? I think it’s all a big lie.”

Ah Fei said, “Even so, it can still allow people to have dreams and hopes, and that’s always good.”

Lin Xian Er said, “I never thought you’d know about such superstition.”

Ah Fei stared into the distance, where the shooting star disappeared. His eyes showed much sadness, then said, “I knew this since I was a little kid.”

Lin Xian Er watched those eyes closely, then said soothingly, “You remembered your mother, didn’t you? Did she tell you about it?”

Ah Fei didn’t respond, just walked ahead quickly.

Ah Fei originally thought he saw a huge mansion, but as he got closer, it seemed to have disappeared.

Lin Xian Er looked at the wall surrounding the place. “This is a tall wall. Could it be 40 feet?”

“That sounds about right.”

Lin Xian Er asked, “Do you think you can jump over?”

Ah Fei said, “No one can jump that high. If you want to get in, I can think of another way.”

Lin Xian Er said, "This is Third Brother Shen's home."

Ah Fei asked, "Is he my second victim?"

Lin Xian Er said, "I know you don't want to hurt merchants. But there are many different kinds of merchants."

"Which kind is him?"

"The worse, dirtiest kind."

She smiled. "Think about it. How else can he open so many businesses in the city? Why else would he have such tall walls in his house?"

Ah Fei said, "There's nothing wrong with having tall walls. And there are no laws against having too many businesses."

Lin Xian Er said, "The tall walls means that he's scared from doing all his crooked dealings. He has so many shops because he takes them from others?"

Lin Xian Er said, "The Shen family is very big and rich. Last generation it had five siblings. This generation, there are sixteen brothers. The sixteen brother opened forty some businesses."

Ah Fei said, "So each one owns three or so. That's not a big deal."

Lin Xian Er responded, "But all of them belong to Third Brother Shen."

"Why?"

Chapter 23: Into a Trap

Lin Xian Er and Ah Fei came on this cold, windy night to the front of a large mansion. Pointing at the unusually tall wall, Lin Xian Er said, "This is Third Brother Shen's house. He and his brothers opened forty some businesses together, but now they're all his, because his fifteen brothers have all entered the casket."

Ah Fei asked, "How did they die?"

Lin Xian Er said, "Officially, from illnesses. But no one knows what really happened. Everyone found it strange how fifteen perfectly healthy people can all die within a three year period, when Third Brother Shen wasn't sick at all."

Ah Fei did not say anything else, just one simple sentence. "I'll go meet him tomorrow night."

With perfect hand-feet coordination, Ah Fei climbed over the wall.

After flipping over, he saw a large garden with many houses. At this hour, most lights are out as people are asleep.

Lin Xian Er found a servant who drew a map for him. So Ah Fei knows exactly where to look.

Third Brother Shen is still awake, this cunning businessman's hair is already white, yet still sat under the candlelight with his abacus, calculating his earnings.

This abacus skills aren't the fastest, because his fingers are short, yet quite thick. How could a man from such a rich family have hands like the workers?

Because when he was a child, his dad kicked him out of the house, so he spent five years outside. No one knows what he did, some say he was a beggar, some say he went to Shaolin and worked manual labor, and learned some great kung fu. That's why when his brothers and cousins died, no one would dare say anything, despite their suspicions.

Obviously, he denied all allegations, but he can't deny that pair of hands he has. It's a pair that has obviously learned a type of Iron Fist kung fu, and quite well at that. Otherwise, his eldest cousin wouldn't have suddenly died while spitting out blood.

Ah Fei suddenly pushed open the window, entering the room.

Third Brother Shen has a very good reaction, yet by the time he noticed the window was open, Ah Fei is already in front of him. He could not believe someone has this type of speed, scared out of his wits, and just froze.

Ah Fei looked at him coldly and asked, "Are you Third Brother Shen?"

Third Brother Shen just kept nodding.

Ah Fei said, "Do you know what I'm doing here?"

He still just kept nodding his head.

Ah Fei said, "Do you have anything to say?"

This time, Third brother Shen stopped nodding, and started to shake his head.

Ah Fei's sword came out, yet at this instant, he sensed that something's wrong, an intuition similar to that of an animals, like a rabbit sensing a wild wolf. But he did not hear anything, nor see even a shadow of that wolf.

Without hesitation this time, Ah Fei pulled out his sword again!

As fast as the shooting stars, his sword cut through Third Brother Shen's chest, only to hear several clanking sounds. Apparently, the sword cut onto a metal plate, no wonder he can't cut through it.

After his attack, Third Brother Shen immediately rolled under the table. Ah Fei immediately jumped, trying to escape, but unfortunately, he's still slow by a step.

At this time, a net dropped from the top of the building, the net is as big as the room, so everyone in it will get caught.

Ah Fei is not caught under the net.

Strangely enough, he did not panic or even feel frightened, instead he just felt sadness, because suddenly realized how it feels to be an animal caught by a hunter.

And it's impossible for an animal to escape the traps of a hunter.

Ah Fei did not struggle.

He knows it's useless.

At this time, two shadows fell on top of the net, each with a long staff. Soon, eight of Ah Fei's pressure points had been sealed.

These two people are Shaolin's Xin Jian and Bai Xiao Sheng.

Third Brother Shen is no longer under the table, because there's a hidden passageway under it.

Obviously, this was all a trap.

Bai Xiao Sheng's face is filled with delight. "I knew you were going to come here, do you give up?"

Ah Fei did not respond.

Although he can still talk, he didn't bother responding, nor ask, "How did you know I was going to be here?"

His eyes are hollow, as if he's not thinking at all.

He can't think? Or doesn't want to think? Or can't bring himself to think.

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "I know you're trying to save your friend Li Xun Huan, so you pretended to be the Plum Flower Bandit."

Ah Fei said loudly, "I AM the Plum Flower Bandit. I don't have to pretend. I also don't know who Li Xun Huan is."

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "Really... brother Xin Jian, he said he's the Plum Flower Bandit, do you believe him?"

"No."

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "But this is pretty hard to prove. Brother Xian Jian, do you know who killed Hong Tian Lei?"

"The Plum Flower Bandit."

"How did he die?"

"Although his body has the mark of the plum flower, the attack that killed him was on his Xuan Ji Pressure Point."

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "In that case, the Plum Flower Bandit is not only a great fighter, but also a master of pressure points, then."

"Correct."

Bai Xiao Sheng Smiled, turning to Ah Fei, "If you can tell me the names of the pressure points I just sealed, we'll agree that you're the Plum Flower Bandit, and then immediately release Li Xun Huan. How about it?"

Ah Fei bit his teeth hard.

Bai Xiao Sheng sighed. "You really are his good friend. For him, you're willing to sacrifice your life. But I wonder how important you are to him. If you can make him come out of that room, then that would be quite good."

There's wine in the cup.

Li Xun Huan has the cup in his hands.

At the corner of the room is a thin, seemingly weak monk, although past the middle age, but doesn't look too old, and

carries a look of a bookworm.

No one would believe that this is Reverend Xin Shu.

Although he's Li Xun Huan's hostage, his mind is still at peace, sitting quietly at the corner.

Li Xun Huan suddenly said to Xin Shu with smile, "I can't believe Shaolin has wine of his quality, how about a cup?"

Xin Shu shook his head.

Li Xun Huan said, "I'm drinking wine in front of your brother's corpse. Does that count as rudeness?"

Xin Shu said, "It's universally accepted that people use wine as a way to toast others. No matter the place, you're not being rude at all."

Li Xun Huan said, "Very good. No wonder people say that once you enter the monastery, your heart is more free."

Xin Shu's peaceful expression changed a bit, as if trying to hide some pain.

Then he sighed, his face filled with sorrow, whether for the deceased or for him, no one knows.

Li Xun Huan looked at his wine cup, then also sighed. "To be honest, I didn't expect you to be the one to save me this time."

Xin Shu said, "I didn't save you."

Li Xun Huan said, "Fourteen years ago, I resigned from my government post, although the official reason is because I

was tired of being in politics, the reality is, if you hadn't written that scripture saying that I have dirty dealings with bandits, my mind would not have been so set."

Xin Shu closed his eyes, then said, "The old power-hungry Hu Yun Ji has long died, why do you bring him up again?"

Li Xun Huan said, "You're right. Once one enters the monastery, he's a different person. Still, I would never believe that you'd be the one to save me today."

Xin Shu opened his eyes, then said loudly, "I already told you, I didn't save you. But because my inner power is so weak, I couldn't escape your grasp. You don't need to feel like you owe me anything."

"But unless you hinted at me to escape here, I might not have chosen to come into this room. If you had struggled, I might not be able to truly trap you here."

Xin Shu moved his mouth, but no words came out.

Li Xun Huan smiled, "Monks should not lie, besides, it's just us two here."

Xin Shu suddenly said, "Although I do have the intention of saving you, it was not because of that incident."

Li Xun Huan did not seem surprised, and asked, "Then why?"

From his look, Xin Shu seemingly doesn't know what to say.

Li Xun Huan did not force him, instead just finished his wine.

At this time, someone from outside the window yelled, "Li

Xun Huan, look out the window.”

This is the voice of Xin Jian.

When Li Xun Huan finally looked out the window, his expression immediately changed.

He never thought Ah Fei would fall into their hands.

Bai Xiao Sheng just stood there looking smug, then said, “Li Tan Hua, I guess you should recognize him, right? For you, he’d rather be known as the Plum Flower Bandit. How do you think you should thank him?”

Xin Jian said loudly, “If you want to save his life, you better come out and surrender.”

Li Xun Huan’s hands started to shake. He didn’t see Ah Fei’s face, because his face is on the ground, as if suffered some major injuries.

Xin Jian suddenly raised Ah Fei’s body. “Li Xun Huan, I give you four hours. If you don’t come out with my sixth brother by sunset, you’ll never see your good friend again.”

Bai Xiao Sheng said, “Li Tan Hua, this person is quite good to you, you really should respond in kind.”

Li Xun Huan doesn’t know what to do.

He saw how they dragged Ah Fei around like a dog, how his scars showed the torture he’s been through.

Yet this youngster did not say a single word.

He only glanced at the window, his expression that of calmness, as if to tell Li Xun Huan that he doesn’t care for

death.

Li Xun Huan sighed. "My good friend. I really understand what you're thinking. You don't want me to save you."

Xin Shu kept looking at him, then suddenly asked, "So what are you going to do?"

Li Xun Huan drank three more cups, then smiled. "Of course I'll give myself up. You can tie me up any time you want."

Xin Shu said, "But you know you'll die if you leave!"

"I know."

"Yet you'll still go?"

"Of course." His response is so certain, leaving no room for argument.

Xin Shu said, "Don't you think this is too stupid?"

Li Xun Huan smiled. "Everyone does a few stupid things in his life. If everyone only does smart things, then wouldn't life get too boring?"

Xin Shu thought over those words, then said, "You're right. A man's got to do what a man's got to do. You know you'll die if you do this. But you still must do it!"

Li Xun Huan chuckled, "At least you certainly know how I think."

Xin Shu continued, "Friendship comes first, before life and death. Li Xun Huan really is Li Xun Huan."

Li Xun Huan did not look at him, just said, "I'll go first."

Xin Shu suddenly said, "Hold on!"

It's as if he suddenly made an important decision, his eyes stared at Li Xun Huan. "I wasn't finished."

"Really?"

Xin Shu said, "I already told you, I have another reason for saving you."

"Right."

Xin Shu said, "This is a big secret of Shaolin, and affects many people, so I didn't want to tell you."

Li Xun Huan stood there listening.

Xin Shu said again, "Shaolin has countless rare books, some are Buddhist scriptures, others are kung fu manuals."

"I know this, of course."

Xin Shu said, "For the past hundred years, more than a few people have tried to steal these things from Shaolin, but no one has succeeded."

He continued, "Although monks do not kill, these scriptures are still the basis of our temple. So anyone tries to steal it will receive the wrath of Shaolin."

Li Xun Huan said, "I rarely hear anyone who dares to rob this place."

Xin Shu said, "You're an outsider, so you obviously don't

know the details. Actually, there has been seven instances where Shaolin has been robbed, one is for calming the heart, while the others are all top kung fu manuals.”

Li Xun Huan couldn't help but be taken aback, “So who is it?”

Xin Shu said, “The weirdest thing is that there were no evidence of the robberies, nor any trails for us to investigate.”

After the first two robberies, we have significantly upgraded our security, yet the robberies still continued. Originally, third brother guarded the room, but he's since retired.”

Li Xun Huan said, “This is quite a big deal. Why hasn't there been any rumors?”

Xin Shu said, “Because this is so important, the abbot warned everyone to close their mouths, so including you, only nine people know about this.”

Li Xun Huan said, “So other than the seven reverends, who's the eighth person?”

“Bai Xiao Sheng.”

Li Xun Huan sighed, “This guy really does get into a lot of other people's businesses.”

Xin Shu said, “After third brother left, second brother and I took his place as the guardian, and only for the past half a month.”

Li Xun Huan said, “If Reverend Xin Mei was guarding the

room, then why did he leave?"

Xin Shu said, "Because second brother suspects that the Plum Flower Bandit has a hand in this, so he had to look into it. Who'd have thought that he'd never come back."

After a while, Xin Shu said, "Second brother and I have been old friends, before he left, he took out the three most sacred scriptures from the book room, and hid them in three separate places. Only the abbot and I know where they are."

"And one is in this room, right?"

"Correct."

Li Xun Huan said, "No wonder they're so hesitant to attack this room."

Xin Shu said, "Simply because this series of robberies are so strange, second brother and I made an assumption, that there is perhaps an insider.

Although we've been suspicious, neither of us dare to say it, because other than us seven reverends, no one else could've stolen those scriptures."

Li Xun Huan's eyes brightened. "So the thief could very well be one you seven."

Xin Shu said, "Us seven brother have all been in here for at least ten years, we trust each other deeply. Except..."

"Except what?"

"Except when second brother left, he told me he's deeply suspicious of one person among us seven."

Li Xun Huan immediately asked, "Who's that?"

Xin Shu shook his head. "He didn't say it, because he didn't want to make wrongful accusations, he only hoped that the thief really is the Plum Flower Bandit."

When he got here, Xin Shu's throat tightened, unable to speak.

Li Xun Huan said, "I understand how Xin Mei feels, but how can he watch as that thief still free, when he has no chance to say his name?"

Xin Shu said, "Second brother thought about this, so before he left, he told me, if he were to ever die on the trip, I should read his diary, because the name of person he's suspicious of is on the last page."

Li Xun Huan said, "So where is it now?"

"Originally with the rare scripture, but now in my hands."

He took out a book, which Li Xun Huan immediately grabbed. Every single word talks about Buddhist principles, with no words talking about the suspect."

Li Xun Huan asked, "So did the suspect tear out the last page?"

Xin Shu said, "Not only that, but also the scripture is now a blank book!"

Li Xun Huan said, "If that's the case, then the suspect already knows that the second brother suspects him."

“Correct.”

“But only you and the abbot knows of the location, so do you suspect...”

Xin Shu said, “Not totally. Because if the suspect knows that the second brother is suspicious of him, he’d follow the second brother moves closely, and perhaps found the hidden location that way. But...”

“But what?”

“Actually, when second brother came back, he was still alive. And he shouldn’t have died!”

When he heard this, Li Xun Huan was quite shocked.

Only to see Xin Shu tightened his fist. “Although I’m not an expert on poison, I still learned a lot about it the past few years from our books. So when I saw second brother’s condition as he came back, I knew that he can be saved, or at least shouldn’t have died so quickly!”

Li Xun Huan said, “So you’re saying...”

Xin Shu said, “Obviously, whoever stole the scriptures also killed second brother.”

Li Xun Huan suddenly felt that this room became very small, as he tried to gasp for breath.

He circled the room, calmed down, and then asked, “So how many people came here to look at him?”

Xin Shu said, "Big brother, fourth brother, fifth brother, and seventh brother all have been here."

"So anyone of them could be the murderer?"

Xin Shu nodded, "This is a huge misfortune of our monastery. I shouldn't have told you, but now I realized that you're not the type who betrays your friends. So I want you to..."

"You want me to help you find the real killer."

"Correct."

Li Xun Huan thought for a moment, then asked slowly, "But what if the killer is Xin Hu?"

Xin Shu suddenly froze, sweat poured down his forehead.

Li Xun Huan said, "Even if everyone at Shaolin knows that the killer is Xin Hu, no one would admit it, would they?"

Xin Shu didn't respond, because there's nothing to say. Everyone treats Shaolin as the renowned institution in the martial world. What would they say if Shaolin's abbot is a killer?

Li Xun Huan said, "Even if I can prove that Xin Hu is the killer, I bet you still wouldn't say any nice words for me, in order to protect your reputation."

Xin Shu sighed. "You're right. For the reputation of Shaolin, I am willing to sacrifice everything."

Li Xun Huan said, "Then why do you ask me to do this?"

Xin Shu said, "Although I won't do anything that will damage Shaolin's reputation, as long as you can prove who killed brother Xin Mei, I'll will make sure he dies with me."

Li Xun Huan said, "How could a monk talk about murder? Looks like you're still attached to the outside world."

Xin Shu said, "Even Buddha himself has been angry, much less just a mere monk."

Li Xun Huan said, "With these words, I'm content."

Xin Shu said, "You mean you know who the killer is?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I don't. But I know someone who does."

Xin Shu said, "Obviously, the killer himself does."

Li Xun Huan said, "Other than the killer, another person does. That person's in this room."

"Who?"

Li Xun Huan pointed at the corpse of Xin Mei, "Him!"

Xin Shu said, "Regrettably, he can no longer talk."

Li Xun Huan chuckled, "But sometimes even the dead can talk."

He took off the cover sheet on Xin Mei's body. Sunlight shined on his face, which looked dark grey.

Li Xun Huan asked, "Have you ever seen a victim of the Five-Poison Kid?"

“No.”

Chapter 24: Catching the Traitor

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Then you're really quite lucky. Because it's hardly a pretty sight."

Obviously, anyone who dies from poison must look pretty bad.

Li Xun Huan closed his eyes, then said slowly, "A few years ago, I saw a person who died from his poison. In a few seconds, his whole face turned black, and soon after, his whole body decayed."

Xin Shu stared at Xin Mei's body, then yelled, "But second brother has been dead for several days..."

Li Xun Huan opened his eyes again. "That's right. He's been poisoned for several days, yet his body still hasn't decayed, do you know why?"

Xin Shu shook his head.

Li Xun Huan said, "Because he was given another type of poison!"

Xin Shu said, "You... you mean..."

Li Xun Huan said, "Although he was poisoned by the Five-

Poison Kid, it's not too severe, and was held in check by his inner power. So the poison had not acted when he came to Shaolin."

"That's right."

Li Xun Huan said, "The killer must've been afraid that he'd divulge the secret. Wishing he'd die quickly, he added another type of poison."

Xin Shu said, "There are many ways to kill a person. Why use poison?"

"Because no matter which method he uses, there will be evidence. But since Reverend Xin Mei was already deeply poisoned, this method will leave no traces."

Xin Shu said, "That's true. This way, everyone would think that he's killed by the Five-Poison Kid."

Li Xun Huan said, "This person is very calculating, but he forgot one thing."

"What's that?"

"He forgot that poisons can counteract one another. It's only because he put in heavy doses of his lethal poison, that it prevented Five-Poison Kid's poison from acting. So Xin Mei's body remained in such good condition even after all this time!"

Li Xun Huan's eyes glowed, "After Reverend Xin Mei came back, did he eat anything?"

Xin Shu said, "Just a cup of medicine."

“Who gave him the medicine?”

“The medicine was made by seventh brother Xin Jian. But the person who fed him the medicine are fourth brother Xin Zhu and sixth brother Xin Deng.”

He sighed again. “So all three are suspects.”

Li Xun Huan said, “There are two famous types of poisons in this world. The first tends to be odorless and tasteless, but can make a person die in a horrific way, so it would not just kill someone, but also horrify those watching.”

Xin Shu said, “The Five-Poison Kid’s poison is obviously in this category.”

Li Xun Huan continued, “The second kind might be more easy to detect, but can make someone die without showing any symptom, sometimes so that no one would even think he had died from poison.”

“You’re saying that the killer used this type?”

Li Xun Huan nodded. “It’s only due to their opposite nature that these two poisons would clash. Although the first type of poison is horrifying, this second type of poison might be more deadly. Very few people can mix this type of poison.”

He stared closely at Xin Shu and asked, “How many people in Shaolin knows how to use this?”

Xin Shu took a deep breath. “This...”

Li Xun Huan said, “Shaolin is the head of the martial world. It’s disciples would obviously not learn something as

despicable as this, right?”

Xin Shu said in a sure tone, “There’s absolutely nothing like this taught at Shaolin!”

Li Xun Huan said, “Reverend Xin Zhu and Xin Deng...”

Xin Shu cut him off. “Xin Zhu became a monk at the age of nine. Xin Deng was a monk while he was a baby. I bet none of them had even seen any poisons in their life.”

Li Xun Huan chuckled. “Well, in that case, who would the killer be?”

“You’re saying it’s seventh brother Xin Jian?”

Li Xun Huan did not speak.

Xin Jian became a monk late in his life. Before he entered Shaolin, he was already famous in the martial world, an expert at using poison!

A game of Go is being played in the pavillion.

Bai Xiao Sheng lightly held his piece, snowflakes fell along with his piece, into the snow on the ground.

The scenery is indeed beautiful, but everywhere is filled with hint of murder, and everyone felt extremely uptight.

Reverend Xin Hu, Xin Zhu, Xin Deng, and Xin Jian are all here.

Ah Fei knelt by the side of the pavilion, not even bothering to raise his head.

Xin Hu looked at him, then asked, "Do you think Li Xun Huan will come?"

Bai Xiao Sheng smiled. "Of course."

Xin Hu said, "He's the type of person who'd sacrifice himself for a friend?"

"This is because even thieves have their own codes."

Xin Hu sighed. "Hopefully, you're right..."

His voice suddenly stopped.

He already saw Xin Shu.

Xin Shu has entered the pavilion, but by himself.

Xin Hu stood up to welcome him, and asked, "How are you?"

He didn't ask anything else, simply greeted Xin Shu, really is something only an abbot of Shaolin can do.

Xin Shu said, "Thank you, brother. Thankfully I was spared."

Xin Shu continued, "He went to get the scriptures."

Xin Jian asked, "Scriptures? What scriptures?"

Xin Shu said, "The missing scriptures from the library."

Xin Jian's mouth twitched, then laughed coldly. "So it was him after all! Then why would you let him go?"

Xin Shu said, "Because he's not the thief!"

Xin Jian said, "Then who is it?"

Xin Shu said, "It's you!"

Xin Jian's mouth twitched again, but immediately calmed down. "Fifth brother, how could you say these things? I don't understand."

Xin Shu said, "If you don't understand, then who does?"

Xin Jian turned to Xin Hu, then said, "Please say something, big brother. I have certainly have nothing more to say."

Xin Hu's expression also changed. "Second brother was obviously killed by Li Xun Huan. Why are you helping him now?"

Bai Xiao Sheng became a little angry. "If I remember correctly, brother Xin Shu and Li Xun Huan both passed the imperial examinations the same year."

Xin Jian said coldly, "Fifth brother had obviously also taken Li Xun Huan's poison."

Xin Shu ignored them, and said, "The poison that killed second brother was not Five-Poison Kid's."

Xin Jian cut in. "How would you know?"

Xin Shu laughed coldly. "Do you really think no one knows of what you did? Or did you forget that second brother left something before he died."

He pulled out Xin Mei's diary.

Xin Hu said, "What is this?"

Xin Shu said, "Before second brother left, he already knew who the traitorous thief was. But since he didn't want to do anything before getting all the evidence, Xin Mei wrote down the name on this book, so that in case he died, there would be some evidence.

Xin Hu said with a shock, "Really?"

Xin Jian cut in again. "If there really is my name in that book, I'll..."

Xin Shu said, "What will you do? Although you tore up the last page, how could you know if he didn't also write your name elsewhere?"

Xin Jian's body shook, yelling, "Fifth brother is conspiring with an outsider to frame me. Please look into this, big brother."

Xin Hu still just stood there, looking at Bai Xiao Sheng.

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "Anyone can write those words."

Xin Jian said, "That's right.. Even if my name is in the book, it doesn't prove that second brother wrote it."

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "From what I know, Little Li Tan Hua is a fine scholar. He's skilled in the art of writing."

Xin Jian added, "That's right. If he wants to copy someone's handwriting, it should be very easy."

Xin Hu looked at Xin Shu. "You tend to be a very cautious person, brother. Why are you being so impulsive right now?"

Xin Shu's expression remains unchanged, staring at Xin Jian. "If you don't think this isn't enough, I have another piece of evidence."

Xin Hu said, "Oh? Please say it."

Xin Shu said, "The 'Da Muo Yi Jin Jing' hidden in second brother's room is gone."

"Really?"

Xin Shu said, "Li Tan Hua calculated that the thief hasn't had a chance to send away this book, so it must still be in Xin Jian's room. He has went with my students to get it now."

Xin Jian suddenly jumped up and began to yell, "Big brother, don't listen to him. He wants to frame me!"

As he said this, his body is already outside.

Xin Hu raised his eyebrows, got up, and followed behind him.

In an instant, they all arrived at Xin Jian's room.

The door is already open.

Xin Jian rushed inside, sliced open a closet, and revealed a hidden compartment.

The 'Yi Jin Jing' scripture is inside.

Xin Jian said loudly, "This book was originally in the second brother's room. It's because they want to frame me that they

put it here, but this trick has been used hundreds of times in the past. How could someone as smart as the big brother be duped by your petty tricks?”

When he finished, Xin Shu said, “Even if we did try to frame you, how could you know we put this scripture inside that closet? Why didn’t you look elsewhere first?”

Xin Jian suddenly froze, his head full of sweat.

Xin Shu let out a sigh of relief. “Li Tan Hua already calculated that only this method can make you admit your guilt.”

Only to hear someone laugh, “But this method really is quite risky. If he doesn’t fall for it, then there really is no way for us to catch him!”

In the midst of the laughter, Li Xun Huan appeared.

Xin Hu sighed deeply, then bowed to greet him.

Li Xun Huan returned the gesture.

Xin Jian back-tracked slowly, but Xin Zhu and Xin Deng already blocked his path. The expression on their faces are deadly.

Xin Hu said, Dan E, Shaolin treated you so well, how could you do something like this?”

Dan E is Xin Jian’s name before becoming a monk.

Dan E, sweating profusely, said, “I... I admit my mistake.”

He suddenly dropped on his knees and said, “But I was being manipulated by someone else.”

Xin Hu said loudly, "Who?"

Bai Xiao Sheng suddenly cut in, "Actually, I think I know."

Xin Hu said, "Please, do tell."

Bai Xiao Shen said, "Him!"

Everyone immediately turned towards where Bai Xiao Sheng was pointing at, but they didn't see anyone.

By the time they turned back, Xin Hu's expression changed greatly.

Bai Xiao Sheng's hand is already on his back, his fingers controlled Xin Hu's four major pressure points.

Xin Shu's expression also changed. "It's you!"

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "I simply wanted to borrow some books. Who'd have thought you people are so stingy."

Xin Hu said, "We've been friends for over ten years. I'd never thought you'd do something like this to me."

Bai Xiao Sheng sighed, "I didn't want to do this either. But since Dan E wants to drag me down with him, I have to do this."

Dan E immediately jumped up, picking up the 'Yi Jin Jing' scripture, and laughed. "That's right. You'll have to escort us down the mountain. If any of you want to see your abbot alive, then you better not make any sudden moves."

Despite his immense anger, Xin Shu could not help but simply watch.

Xin Hu said, "If you people value Shaolin, then forget about me. Capture this traitor right now!"

Bai Xiao Sheng said, "It doesn't matter what you say. They won't play around with your life. The life of the Shaolin abbot is way too important."

As his last word came out, his smile suddenly stopped!

The dagger shined!

Little Li's Flying Dagger is out of the hand!

The dagger has flown into his throat!

No one saw how the dagger came out.

Bai Xiao Sheng had kept Xin Hu as his shield, his throat behind Xin Hu's throat. He only left a tiny bit of his throat out.

It can hide behind Xin Hu's throat at any time.

In this situation, no one would dare to make a move.

But as the dagger shines, faster than lightning, Little Li's Flying Dagger reached his throat!

Xin Shu, Xin Zhu, Xin Deng, all immediately went over to protect Xin Hu.

Bai Xiao Sheng's eyes filled with hate, staring at Li Xun Huan. His whole body showed immense disbelief and shock.

Even in death, he could not believe that Li Xun Huan's dagger is in his throat.

His mouth is still trying to say something, except he couldn't say it. But everyone can see that he was trying to say, "I'm wrong... I'm wrong..."

That's right. Bai Xiao Sheng knows all, sees all, but was wrong about one thing.

Little Li's Flying Dagger is much more faster than even he had ever imagined!

Bai Xiao Sheng fell.

Li Xun Huan sighed. "Bai Xiao Sheng wrote a 'Book of Weaponry', ranking the top weapons in the world. It's unfortunate that he'd die from one of the weapons that he ranked."

Xin Hu bowed several times, then said, "I was wrong too."

His expression suddenly changed. "Where's that traitor?"

Dan E had taken advantage of the confusion and fled.

A person like him would never miss an opportunity like this. In an instant, he had left the courtyard.

The disciples don't know about this event yet, so even if they see him, they wouldn't stop him.

As he reached the pavilion, Ah Fei was just about to get up.

Although Bai Xiao Sheng sealed his pressure points very tightly, it still loosened after all this time.

When Dan E saw him, hate filled his eyes. He wanted to take out all his frustration on Ah Fei.

After going through so much torture, how could Ah Fei defend himself?

So to kill Ah Fei can't possibly take long.

Without saying a word, Dan E attacked, Shaolin's fist is world-renowned, and Dan E has been in Shaolin for over ten years, so he's obviously quite good at it.

This punch contained all his power, fast and deadly, can easily kill. Dan E realized that he has plenty of time to escape even after killing Ah Fei.

But who'd have thought that as this instant, Ah Fei's hand suddenly shot out.

He moved later, but struck first!

Dan E only felt his throat icy cold, with sharp pain along with the coldness, his breathing stopped, as if he was being suffocated.

His face is filled with disbelief... he knew this youngster is very fast, but what did the youngster use to penetrate his throat?

He'll never know the answer.

Dan E also fell.

Ah Fei got up, catching his breath.

Xin Hu and the others have caught up by now, and also were shocked, because no one thought that this youngster in this condition could possibly kill Dan E!

A stick of ice stuck in Dan E's throat.

The ice has begun to melt.

This youngster only needed a stick of ice to kill one of the top seven reverends of Shaolin.

Xin Hu looked at that pale white face, not knowing what to say.

Ah Fei didn't even look at them, only walked towards Li Xun Huan, then he immediately smiled.

Li Xun Huan also smiled.

Xin Hu's voice is still weak, "Why don't you two come to my..."

Ah Fei cut him off, "Is Li Xun Huan the Plum Flower Bandit?"

Xin Hu said, "No."

"Am I the Plum Flower Bandit?"

"No."

Ah Fei said, "If we're both not, then we can now, right?"

Xin Hu forced a smile. "Of course, but I think perhaps you

should rest up here....”

Ah Fei cut him off again. “Don’t worry about that. Forget that I can actually walk out, even if I have to crawl out, I’d still crawl down the mountain this instant.”

Xin Zhu, Xin Deng both dropped their heads. No one had ever been so disrespectful to a Shaolin abbot in hundreds of years. But they can only swallow this.

Ah Fei had already grabbed Li Xun Huan’s hands, and started to walk out of Shaolin.

Li Xun Huan turned around and said, “Today we part, if we meet again someday, forgive this lack of respect.”

Xin Shu said, “I’ll escort you out.”

Li Xun Huan said, “Escort like not escort. Not escorting like escort. Why would reverend need to make the distinction?”

When they’re out of eyesight, Xin Hu took a long deep breath. He didn’t say anything, but the silence is much more painful than any words.

Xin Zhu suddenly said, “Brother you shouldn’t have let him go.”

Xin Hu said, “Why?”

“Although Li Xun Huan did not steal our scriptures nor killed second brother, we still can’t prove that he’s not the Plum Flower Bandit.”

Xin Hu said, “So how can he prove that?”

Xin Zhu said, “He can do so by finding the real Plum Flower Bandit.”

Xin Hu sighed again. “I know he’ll find out, and then escort him here. This isn’t important. It’s just those six scriptures...”

Although the thief has been caught, the scriptures are still not found, who did he give these to?

Who’s really behind all this?

Li Xun Huan doesn’t like to walk, especially in the snow, but he has no choice now, with the icy wind cut like knives, there are no carriages.

But Ah Fei is quite accustomed to walking. In other people’s minds, walking is tedious, but for him, it’s relaxation. The more he walks, the more energy he recovers.

They shared their stories with each other, and Li Xun Huan began to think, then said, “You’re not the Plum Flower Bandit, neither am I. So who is it?”

Ah Fei stared into the distance. “He’s already dead.”

Li Xun Huan said, “Did he really die? Did you really kill the Plum Flower Bandit?”

Ah Fei did not speak.

Li Xun Huan suddenly chuckled. “Have you ever thought that perhaps the Plum Flower Bandit might not be a man?”

“If he’s not a man, then who is he?”

Li Xun Huan smiled, “If he’s not a man, then he’s obviously a woman.”

Chapter 25: The Sword is Ruthless but the Swordsman's Sentimental

Ah Fei couldn't help but laugh when he heard that the Plum Flower Bandit is a woman. "How can a woman rape women?"

Li Xun Huan said, "This is why she's so cunning. No one would expect the Plum Flower Bandit to be a woman."

"But there's no way a woman can rape a woman."

Li Xun Huan chuckled, "There is one way."

He coughed a few times lightly, continued, "If the Plum Flower Bandit really is a woman, then she can simply use men to do the dirty work for her, then at an opportune time, kill off these men."

Ah Fei said, "You think too much."

Li Xun Huan said, "Perhaps you're right, but it's always better to think too much than to not think at all."

Ah Fei then said, "The Plum Flower Bandit first appeared thirty years ago. He should be over fifty by now."

Li Xun Huan said, "The Plum Flower Bandit of thirty years

ago might be a different person. They might be teacher and student, or father and daughter.”

Ah Fei stopped talking.

Li Xun Huan also did not speak for a long time, then said, “Bai Xiao Sheng cannot possibly be the mastermind behind stealing those scriptures, because he cannot possibly make Xin Jian take this kind of risk for him.”

“Really.”

Li Xun Huan continued, “Before Xin Jian entered Shaolin, he was already very famous, if he wanted money, he’d have it, so money can’t be the reason.”

“Really.”

“Although Bai Xiao Sheng’s martial arts skills are high, such a thing is practically useless to a Shaolin reverend. “

Ah Fei said, “Maybe he has something which he could threaten Xin Jian with.”

Li Xun Huan asked, “What type of things? Before he entered Shaolin, everything that Dan E did has nothing to do with Xin Jian, since you’re suppose to cut yourself off from your previous life after becoming a monk. Bai Xiao Sheng couldn’t have used anything that he did beforehand to threaten him. Of course, after Dan E entered Shaolin, he couldn’t have done anything anyway.”

“Why?”

“If he wanted to do something bad, then there’s no point in entering Shaolin in the first place. Everyone knows how

strict Shaolin's rules are, so he would never take the risk, unless..."

Ah Fei said, "Unless what?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Unless there is something which can move him. This cannot be fame or money."

Ah Fei said, "So what else can possibly make him do something like this?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Only an incredibly gorgeous beauty."

Ah Fei said, "Plum Flower Bandit?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Correct. Only an incredible beauty can possibly make him betray Shaolin, to make him steal those scriptures."

Ah Fei said, "So how do you know that the Plum Flower Bandit must be an incredibly beautiful woman?"

Li Xun Huan remained quiet for a while before speaking again, "Perhaps I'm wrong... Hopefully I'm wrong."

Ah Fei suddenly stopped walking, then stared at Li Xun Huan, "Are you going back to Happy Cloud Manor?"

Li Xun Huan smiled a little, said, "I really don't know where else to go."

It's a dark night.

Only a single candle in the house remains lit.

Li Xun Huan stared blankly at this light, after a long time, he

took out a handkerchief, held it to his mouth and began coughing again.

Blood appeared on the handkerchief, which he put back into his pockets, then said with a smile, "I suddenly don't want to go in anymore."

Ah Fei asked, "Why not?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I don't know. I tend to do a lot things for which I do not know the reason of."

Ah Fei said, "Long Xiao⁴ Yun treated you like this, yet you don't want to find him?"

Li Xun Huan simply smiled, said, "But he didn't wrong me... because for one's own wife and kids, a person can be forgiven for anything."

Ah Fei stared at him for a long, long time, then lowered his head slowly, said, "You really are a strange person, but also a friend one can never forget."

Li Xun Huan said, "Of course you can't forget me, because we'll surely meet again in the future."

Ah Fei said, "But... but now..."

Li Xun Huan said, "But now you need to take care of some business, so go ahead and do that."

They then simply stood there quietly.

The wind blew through the land.

From afar came the sound of midnight drums, so far away

that it seemed to sound like tears dropping on grass.

No stars, no moon, just fog...

Li Xun Huan suddenly laughed, then said, "There's fog. Tomorrow's weather must be nice."

Ah Fei said, "Yes."

He suddenly felt like something got stuck in her throat, unable to speak more.

He flipped over the high walls, found the candles in Lin Xian Er's room still burning, a woman's shadow appearing on the window paper.

Ah Fei's heart retracted.

The person inside seems to be reading a book, but also thinking about something.

Ah Fei opened the door.

As he opened the door, he saw that unforgettable face. As he opened the door, he could not move any further. Lin Xian Er turned around, looked shocked, then smiled. "It's you," she said.

Ah Fei said, "It's me."

He found that his voice is very distant. So distant he couldn't even hear himself.

Lin Xian Er put her hand over her chest, then said, "Look at you, you really scared me."

Ah Fei said, "You thought I was dead. That's why you were so surprised when I came in, right?"

Lin Xian Er blinked her eyes. "What are you talking about? Come on it quickly, you'll catch a cold."

She held Ah Fei's hand, pulling him inside the room.

Ah Fei's hand pulled away from hers.

Lin Xian Er said sweetly, "You're angry. Who are you angry with? I'll help you."

She tried to embrace Ah Fei, but he pushed her back.

Lin Xian Er lost her balance and fell down.

Soon, tears appeared from her eyes, "Did I make you angry? Why do you treat me this way? What did I do wrong? As long as you tell me, I'd die without regrets."

Ah Fei tightened his fists.

He just saw that Lin Xian Er was reading a book, a Buddhist scripture.

Shaolin Temple's sacred scripture.

Ah Fei stared at her, as if he has never seen her before.

Ah Fei said coldly, "What did you do? You knew that once I stepped into Third Master Shen's room, I am a dead man."

Lin Xian Er said, "What.. what do you mean?"

Ah Fei said, "When Bai Xiao Sheng and Xin Jian gave you the

Shaolin scripture, you told them to make the trap in Third Master Shen's room, to get me, and to get Li Xun Huan."

Lin Xian Er bit her lips and said, "You really think I tried to harm you?"

Ah Fei said, "Of course, because you're the only person who knew I would go to his room that night."

Lin Xian Er put her hands over her face, continued to cry. "But, why would I want to hurt you? Why?"

"Because you're the Plum Flower Bandit!"

Lin Xian Er looked like someone just hit her with a whip, suddenly jumped up, said, "I'm the Plum Flower Bandit? You dare call me the Plum Flower Bandit?"

Ah Fei said, "Yes, you're the Plum Flower Bandit."

Lin Xian Er said, "The Plum Flower Bandit is dead, you..."

Ah Fei cut her off, said, "I simply killed one of your puppets, so you can divert attention away from yourself."

He continued, "You knew the Golden Needle Vest is in Li Xun Huan's possession, and that he won't fall for your tricks, so you're in grave danger. That's why you asked him to come to your room that night."

Lin Xian Er said, "I did have a date with him that night, because I didn't know you at the time."

Ah Fei didn't even pay attention to her. "You wanted that puppet to purposely kidnap you, just so Li Xun Huan can save you, to kill him. Once the world thinks that the Plum

Flower Bandit's dead, no one would suspect you."

Lin Xian Er calmed down, said, "Keep going."

Ah Fei said, "But you didn't expect Li Xun Huan to have an accident, even more surprised that I would show up."

Lin Xian Er said, "Don't forget, I also saved you."

"That's right."

"If I were the Plum Flower Bandit, why would I save you?"

Ah Fei said, "Because things didn't go as you planned, so I was useful to you alive at the time. When no one came to search your room those days, I began to suspect you."

Lin Xian Er said, "You think I conspired with Long Xiao Yun and others against him?"

Ah Fei said, "Of course they didn't know what you're up to. You're just using them. Besides, Long Xiao Yun has hated Li Xun Huan for quite a while now, so he obviously had no problems going along with your plans."

Lin Xian Er said, "Did Li Xun Huan tell you these things?"

Ah Fei said, "You think that all men in this world are idiots, puppets you play with, so when Li Xun Huan did not fall for your tricks, you set traps to eliminate him."

Ah Fei found that his voice started shaking, he bit his teeth and continued, "Not only are you devious and cold-hearted, but you're also incredibly greedy, even robbing Shaolin's sacred scriptures. You... you..."

Lin Xian Er sighed, "Looks like I've misjudged you."

Ah Fei said, "But I did not misjudge you!"

Lin Xian Er said, "If I said that it's not Dan E and Bai Xiao Sheng who gave me these scriptures, you won't believe me, right?"

Ah Fei said, "No matter what you say, I'll never believe you again!"

Lin Xian Er started to laugh. "I finally understand you now, understand your heart..."

As she spoke, she walked towards Ah Fei, her steps steady.

The wind is blowing, the candlelight wavering.

Candlelight shined on her beautiful face, filled with her tears, as she stared at Ah Fei, said, "I know you're here to kill me, right?"

Ah Fei tightened his fists, close his mouth tightly.

She pointed to her heart. "Since you have your sword, why haven't you killed me yet? I can only hope that you stab me in the heart."

Ah Fei's hand is already on his sword.

Lin Xian Er looked up at him, said, "Please go ahead, I'd be happy to die in your hands."

Ah Fei could not look at her, instead looking at his sword.

Her eyes filled with emotions, with tenderness, with love, yet

also hate... nothing in this world can touch a man's heart more than her eyes.

A gleam of light appeared in the corner of her eyes. "You're the person I love the most in this world. If even you don't believe me, then there's no reason for me to keep on living."

Ah Fei held his sword tightly, his fingers became sore.

Lin Xian Er continued, "If you think I'm the Plum Flower Bandit, that I'm a despicable woman, then just go ahead and kill me, I... I won't blame you."

Ah Fei's hand began to shake.

The ruthless sword, the sword is ruthless, but what about people?

How could people have no emotions?

The candlelight went out.

But Lin Xian Er's beauty is even more noticeable in the darkness.

She did not speak, but in the darkness, even her breathing sound like a soothing voice, capable of warming one's heart.

Is there anything more powerful than the power of love?

Looking at a woman like this, looking at the strongest emotions he has felt in his entire life, looking at this endless darkness...

How could Ah Fei possibly kill her?

The sword is ruthless! But the swordsman's sentimental!

Chapter 26: Stranger in the Little Shop

Autumn, the leaves are falling.

At the end of the street is a big mansion, like the autumn leaves, almost time to fall.

At the front is a big door, seemingly haven't been opened for over a year now, the bronze filled with rust.

It's been a while since any sound came from the inside, other than an occasional cricket or bird.

However, it hasn't always been this way. Seven Jin Shi and three Tan Hua had lived here, including one who's also a hero in the martial world.

But two years ago, this mansion changed owners, and many amazing events happened here, many top-level fighters died here.

After that, this mansion became very quiet.

People started to wonder about this place, some feel there's an evil presence inside.

Now, you can no longer hear laughter inside. No more lanterns brightening the mansion in the evenings. Only a

single candlelight in little building in the back.

It seems that a person's here waiting for someone, but who is she waiting for?

No matter how dirty, how dark a place, some people would live there.

Perhaps it's because they can't go anywhere else, or that they're sick of life, preferring to hide in the dark, waiting for others to forget them.

On the street here is a little shop, selling food and wine in the front, an Inn with a few rooms in the back. The owner, Hunchback Sun, is a handicapped person.

He knows that this street isn't very good for business, but won't move his shop.

He prefers to simply live a solitary life here, not hearing others' laughter or joy, because he knows that no money can buy peace.

Of course he's lonely.

About a year ago, a strange customer came into this little shop. Actually, he wasn't wearing anything special, or looked very special.

Although he's fairly tall, and looked pretty dashing, but he also looked quite frail, as if he's always sick, and he kept coughing.

He really looks like an ordinary man.

But Hunchback Sun immediately knew that he was special.

He did not laugh at Sun for his hunchback, nor cared, especially not tried to show sympathy.

He wasn't picky about the wine, nor did he judge it, he just doesn't talk much period.

The strange part is, after he entered the little shop, he never walked out.

The first time he came in, he chose a seat by the corner, asked for some dried tofu, some beef, two pieces of bread, and seven jugs of wine.

When he finished all his wine, he asked Hunchback Sun to get more, then slept in the last room of the Inn, until he woke up the next dusk.

By the time he came out, his seven jugs of wine would be all gone.

It's been over a year now, every night the same corner, the same dishes, some dried tofu, beef, two pieces of bread and seven jugs of wine.

He would cough and drink at the same time. When he's done, he would carry seven more back to his room, not showing up again until the next night.

Hunchback Sun is also an alcoholic, but he's still in awe of this person. He has never seen anyone drink fourteen jugs before getting drunk before.

He would sometimes want to ask for this person's, but then decide against it, because he knows that he won't get a

response.

Hunchback Sun is not a chatty person.

So this went on for months, until those few days when it was quite cold, and rained continuously for a few days.

Hunchback Sun went into the back to check on things, found out the back room's window was open, the strange customer lying on the floor, his face terribly red, like it's filled with blood.

Hunchback Sun picked him up, went to get some medicine, cooked it, and took care of him for three days, until he got out of bed, and then asked for more wine.

At that time, Hunchback Sun realized that this guy had a death wish, so he tried to help him, saying, "No one can keep living drinking like this."

But this person simply smiled, asking him, "How do you know drinking would make me live a shorter life?"

Hunchback Sun could not respond.

From that day on, they became friends.

When there are no other customers, they would drink together, talking about useless things. Hunchback Sun realized that this person is quite knowledgeable.

He only refrained from one subject, his past and name.

One time Hunchback Sun asked him, "Since we're now friends, what should I call you?"

He thought for a while, then answered, "I'm a drunkard, why

don't you call me that?"

Therefore, Hunchback Sun realized that this person must've had a terrible past, so he couldn't even bear to bring up his name, preferring to live his life in wine.

Other than wine, this person had one other hobby.

It's woodcarving.

He would always use his little knife to carve pieces of woods, but Hunchback Sun never knows what he's carving, because he never finishes any of the carvings.

This really is a strange customer, to the point where it's scary.

Yet Hunchback Sun hoped that he'd never leave.

This morning, it was especially cold, so Hunchback Sun had to wear his heavy coat before opening shop.

He then saw two people on horsebacks coming his way.

There aren't many people who ride horses in the area, so Hunchback Sun took notice.

These two people both wear long, yellow robes, the person in the front has big eyes, the person in the back with a pointy nose, both with short hair, in their 30s.

These two people don't look out of the ordinary, but their yellow robes made them stick out, they didn't notice Hunchback Sun, simply examining the surroundings.

He knows that he's definitely not on the minds of these two.

Only to see them ride past his shop and out of sight, but soon afterwards, both came back.

Surprisingly, they actually dismounted in front of the shop.

Although Hunchback Sun has a strange temper, he's still a businessman, immediately asked, "Do you need anything?"

The big-eyed man said, "We don't need anything, just want to ask you something."

Hunchback Sun went back to his chores, because he's never a big fan of talking.

The pointed-nose man laughed, then said, "How about if buy some answers from you? A tael of silver per answer."

Hunchback Sun immediately brightened his eyes, nodded and said, "Sure."

As he said those words, he raised a finger.

The big-eyed man laughed, "This also counts as an answer?"

Hunchback Sun said, "Yes."

He raised another finger.

The pointed-nose man asked, "How long have you lived here?"

Hunchback Sun answered, "Twenty to thirty years."

The pointed-nose man asked, "Who lives in this mansion across from you?"

“The Li family.”

The pointed-nose man asked, “Who was the owner after that?”

“His surname is Long, called Long Xiao Yun.”

The pointed-nose man asked, “Have you seen him?”

“No.”

The pointed-nose man asked, “Where is he now?”

“He left.”

The pointed-nose man asked, “When?”

“About a year ago.”

The pointed-nose man asked, “He’s never been back since?”

“No.”

The pointed-nose man asked, “If you’ve never seen him, how could you know so much?”

“His chef often buy wine from me.”

The pointed-nose man thought for a while, then asked, “Has any stranger drop by to ask you questions recently?”

“No. If there is.. then I’d probably be rich today.”

The big-eyed man smiled, “Here’s your reward.”

He tossed some silver over, then without another word, they rode their horses and left.

Hunchback Sun looked at his silver, then said to himself, "I can't believe sometimes it's this easy to make money."

He turned around, suddenly found that drunkard is behind him, looking at where those two men disappeared into.

Hunchback Sun smiled, "You're awake awfully early today."

That drunkard also smiled. "Last night I drank really fast, so I was already sober by morning."

He lowered his head, coughed, then asked, "What day is today?"

Hunchback Sun said, "September 14."

That drunkard's normally white face became a bit red, looked off into the distance, remained quiet for a while, then asked, "Then tomorrow will be September 15th, right?"

The drunkard seemed to want to say something else, but started to cough continuously.

Hunchback Sun sighed, shook his head. "If everyone drank as much as you, then all the wine sellers would be rich by now."

At dusk, candlelight appeared in the little building in the back.

The drunkard still simply drank at his old place.

Chapter 27: More Strangers in the Little Shop

Today that drunkard seems to be a bit different. He's drinking extra slowly, eyes extra bright, no wood in his hand, and especially moved the candle on his table away.

His eyes kept staring at the door, as if waiting for someone.

But the hour has passed, with no customers.

Hunchback Sun yawned, "Looks like there won't be any more customers today, guess it's time to close shop."

That 'drunkard' laughed, said, "Don't be in such a hurry, I guarantee that your business will be exceptional tonight.

Hunchback Sun asked, "How do you know?"

That 'drunkard' answered, "Because I can foretell the future."

He really can tell the future, because within the next hour, several groups of people entered the place.

The first group has two people.

One is a white haired old man wearing a blue robe while holding a pipe.

The other looks to be his granddaughter, with two big, black, shiny ponytails, a pair of big eyes, brighter, shinier, and darker than even her ponytails.

The second group is also two people.

Both looked unclean and unorganized, but very muscular, wearing not only the same clothing, but also the same weapons, as if they're clones.

The third group had the most people, four.

One is tall, one is short, one is a purple-shirt youngster with a spear on his back, and one a green-clothed lady wearing lots of jewelry, twisting her waist while walking like a little girl, when she's old enough to be such a girl's mom.

The last group had only one person.

This person is ridiculously thin, with a soft saber on his waist.

This room only has five tables, so these four groups filled the room. Hunchback Sun became so busy he could only hope tomorrow's business is not nearly as good.

Only to see these four groups simply sitting here drinking wine, talking very little, with all words spoken at a whisper, as if afraid others might hear.

After a while, the youngster with the spear started to stare at the ponytailed girl. Strangely enough, the ponytailed girl apparently doesn't care.

The youngster suddenly laughed. "Is this girl a singer?"

The Ponytailed girl shook her head, her ponytails waving side to side, making her look even prettier.

The youngster said, "Even if you're not a singer, at least you can sing a bit, right? If you sing well, I will certainly reward you."

The Ponytailed girl said, "I can't sing, only talk."

"What can you talk about?"

"Talk about book, stories."

The youngster said, "That's even better, except I don't know what kind of stories do you tell. Scholar and Maiden Meet in the Garden? Minister's Daughter throwing Bouquet*?"

*Not really a bouquet, but a ball someone uses to find a husband. Chinese custom. Bouquet is the closest English word I can think of.

The Ponytailed girl shook her head, said, "Wrong. I tell stories about the newest exciting tales of the martial world."

The youngster clapped his hands, smiling. "Awesome. Awesome. I can guarantee that these are the stories people here most like to hear about. Hurry up and tell the stories."

The Ponytailed girl said, "But I don't know how to tell such stories, only my grandfather can."

The youngster looked at the old man, and then asked her, "Si what can you do?"

“I can only help out my grandpa.”

The old man drank some wine, smoked his pipe, and then said slowly, “Have you heard of the name Li Xun Huan?”

Except for the youngster, no one else had taken notice of these two people, but once they heard the name Li Xun Huan, their ears perked up.

The Ponytailed girl said with a smile, “Of course I’ve heard of him, the heroic, famous Little Li Tan Hua, right?”

The old man said, “Correct.”

The Ponytailed girl said, “I heard the saying that Little Li’s Flying Dagger never misses, even to this day, no one has ever escaped from it. Is this really true?”

The old man said, “If you don’t believe that, you can go ask the knowledgeable Bai Xiao Sheng, or the Five-Poison Kid, then you’d know if this saying is true or not.”

The Ponytailed girl said, “Are you saying that Bai Xiao Sheng and Five-Poison Kid are both dead?”

“Yes. They died simply because they didn’t believe this saying.”

That tall thin man coughed a bit lightly, but everyone else had already been hooked by this story, so they did not take notice.

Only that drunkard lay on his table, as if already drunk.

The old man drank some tea, and then said, “Unfortunately,

this Li Xun Huan is already dead.”

The Ponytailed girl said, “Dead? Who is powerful enough to kill him?”

The old man said, “Himself!”

The Ponytailed girl looked at the old man for a moment, then smiled. “How could he kill himself? I bet he’s still alive.”

The old man sighed, said, “Even if he is still alive, he’s pretty much like a dead man... so unfortunate...”

The Ponytailed girl also sighed, then asked, “Other than him, is there another person who can be considered a hero?”

The old man said, “Have you heard of Ah Fei?”

The Ponytailed girl said, “It does ring a bell.”

Her eyes moved around, then said, “I heard that the speed of his sword is unmatched in the martial world, is this true?”

The old man said, “What do you think of Yi Ku’s kung fu skills?”

The Ponytailed girl said, “In the Book of Weapons, the Green Devil Hand ranks ninth, so he’s obviously very good.”

The old man said, “What about Mr. Iron Flute, Reverend Xin Jian, Zhao Zheng Yi, and Tian Qi?”

The Ponytailed girl said, “These are all very famous people in the martial world. Everyone knows them.”

The old man said, “If Ah Fei’s sword wasn’t very fast, how do

you think all these people lost to him?”

The Ponytailed girl said, “What happened to this Ah Fei?”

The old man sighed again, “Like Little Li Tan Hua, he has disappeared. No one knows where he is, only that he disappeared the same time as Lin Xian Er.”

“Lin Xian Er? You mean the girl considered the most beautiful woman in the world?”

The old man said, “That’s right.”

The Ponytailed girl said, “Oh, what is love? Why do people get trapped by love, and cannot escape...”

That youngster became impatient, said, “Don’t get off-topic, and keep telling the story.”

The old man shook his head and said, “People like Ah Fei and Li Xun Huan have already disappeared, what else is there to talk about in the martial world? That’s all there is, folks.”

That thin man coldly laughed. “You could be wrong.”

The old man said, “Are you saying that your information is better than mine?”

That man looked around. “From what I know, something extraordinary will happen soon.”

The old man said, “Where? When?”

The thin man hit the table, and then said loudly, “At this moment, at this place!”

When he said this, Those two look-alike brothers and the four-member group immediately turned pale, yet that green-robed lady, still smiling, said, "I certainly don't see anything extraordinary happening right now."

That thin man said, "From my understanding, at least six people will die here NOW!"

The green-robed lady asked, "Which six people?"

The thin man drank some wine, then said, "Hu Fei, Duan Kai Shan, Yang Cheng Zu, Hu Mei, and the Yang brothers!"

After he said all six names, those brothers and the four people in the third group immediately got up, and started to scream at him. "Who the hell are you?" "How dare you say such lies in here?"

The loudest voice was obviously that big, muscular man, Duan Kai Shan*.

*Note: Duan Kai Shan translates into 'slicing open mountain'.

This person towered over everyone once he stood, even the big Yang brothers are shorter by half a head.

He apparently wasn't finished with the insults, "I feel that you're the one with bad luck today, that you're not going to live past tonight..."

Before he could finish, that thin man lifted his leg, quickly appeared right before him, then slapped him seventeen times on the cheek.

Although Duan Kai Shan has two hands, he somehow

couldn't block those slaps. Although he has two legs, he somehow couldn't evade those slaps. As if his head has been slapped silly, unable to move.

The others can only look on with amazement.

Only to hear this man say, "You think I'm here to kill you? You're not worthy of being killed by me! I just want to teach you a lesson, so you'll learn to speak in a more civilized manner."

As he spoke, he went back to his seat.

Yang Cheng Zu said, "Hold on. Tell us who is going to come kill us."

As he spoke, the spear on his hand immediately shot up.

The spear flew towards the thin man.

That man didn't even turn around, just said, "The person who'll kill you is almost here!"

Only to see his waist twist a bit, and the spear became stuck to the thin man's body, under the arm. No matter how hard he tried, Yang Cheng Zu could not pull out the spear, his face immediately turned pale.

That thin man said, "Since you won't escape anyway, you might as well just wait here."

The spear then broke.

Only to hear a swish sound, and the head of the spear stuck to the table, where the thin man poured another cup of wine, as if nothing had ever happened.

But the other six people weren't nearly as carefree as he, their faces without color.

They're all thinking, "Who's coming to kill us? Who..."

The wind outside became stronger, the lamps shaking, the thin man simply sitting there quietly.

Who is this man?

With his kung fu, he's obviously one of the top fighters in the world, how could we not know him?"

Why would he come here?

No one knows the answer, so how can they still have the heart to drink?

Some already want to run away, but this would really be cowardly. Besides, it's not like they could anyway.

Just as they're thinking, a cold laughter came from the outside.

The six people immediately frowned, their throats look like they have lumps in them, not just unable to speak, but also unable to breathe.

The Hunchback Sun was already terribly scared, but these six are even more scared.

Four people appeared at the door.

These four people all wore long, yellow robes, one has big eyes, one has pointy nose, the same people who dropped by

in the morning.

Although they reached the front door, no one came in, only just standing there silently, not looking scary at all.

Hunchback Sun can't believe that these six people would be so terrified of them. From the looks of these six people, those four yellow-robed men aren't people, but devils.

They are now becoming envious of that drunkard, who can't see anything, hear anything, and therefore obviously not scared.

The strange thing is the behavior of the first group, the old man so old his teeth are nearly all gone, the girl so young and fragile a breeze can seemingly knock her to the ground.

These two people don't look scared at all, the old man still drinking wine.

Looking at those four men again, they just cleared a path.

A very young man, hands behind his back, walked in slowly.

This youngster also wore a long yellow robe. He looks very elegant, his attitude very refined, the only difference between him and the other four people is that his robe has gold streaks on the side.

However, his face is icy, without any emotions, his eyes focused on that tall, thin man.

The thin man didn't even bother to look at him, instead just kept drinking.

The yellow-robed youngster smiled, turned around, looking

at the six people.

The yellow-robed youngster slowly walked over to them, taking out some gold coins, then put one on each of the six people's heads.

These six people seemingly all turned to wood, just staring at him while he put those coins on them, not even daring to fart.

The yellow-robed youngster still had some coins left in his hand, and walked over to the old man and the young girl.

The old man smiled. "If you want to drink some wine, go ahead. I'll pay."

He seemed a bit drunk, his cheek look like there's an egg in it, his lips swollen, his words almost impossible to understand.

The yellow-robed youngster kept a straight face, staring at him. Suddenly he hit the table, the peanuts on the plate jumped up, flying towards the old man's face.

That old man must be scared stiff, because he didn't even try to dodge the peanuts, just as the peanuts almost reached his face, the yellow-robed youngster held up his arm quickly, his sleeves swished, and the peanuts returned to the plate.

That ponytailed girl began to laugh heartily. "Wow. That's a really neat trick. I can't believe you know magic tricks. Can you do that again? If you do, my grandpa will surely buy you some wine."

The yellow-robed youngster had just shown a top-level

hidden weapon technique, yet he just happened to meet two people who had no idea what it is, thinking that it was all just a parlor trick.

However, this yellow-robed youngster was not mad at all. He looked at the ponytailed girl for a while, smiled, and walked away.

But then the ponytailed girl said impatiently, "Why aren't you doing more tricks? I still want to see more."

The thin man suddenly laughed. "You really don't want to see too many of those kinds of tricks."

"Why?"

The thin man said, "If you knew kung fu, that little trick of his would've turned you into a dead person."

The ponytailed girl looked a bit at the yellow-robed youngster out of the corner of her eyes, as if she didn't believe the thin man, but doesn't dare to ask again.

The yellow-robed youngster wasn't listening to the conversation at all. He simply walked slowly to the drunkard's table, his coins clicking in his hands.

That drunkard had been drunk for a long time, simply sleeping there like a dead man.

The yellow-robed youngster laughed while picking him up by his hair, stared at his face for a second, then released his hand.

As he released his grip, the drunkards fell back onto the table, again asleep.

The thin man said, "Being drunk cures a thousand worries. This saying really is quite accurate, as the drunk man certain is better off than these sober people."

The yellow-robed youngster ignored him, and walked back out the door.

The funny thing is, the six people with coins on their head followed him out, as if they had a leash on them.

They all had gloom faces, looking straight ahead. While their feet moves forward, their upper body are straight as a stick, afraid the coins might drop.

Hunchback Sun has lived for many years, yet still have not seen such a strange sight.

Considering these people's kung fu, they should at least be able to give any enemy somewhat of a fight. Why would they look at this youngster like a mouse seeing a cat?

Hunchback Sun really couldn't understand.

He also doesn't care to understand, either, for a person as old as he is, some things are better off not known.

It's been a while since it rained, so there are a lot of dusts in the wind blowing outside.

Those four yellow-robed people drew a bunch of circles on the ground, each about the size of a soup bowl.

When those six people got outside, they didn't even wait for a command before stepping into the circles.

They then stood as still as wood.

The yellow-robed youngster walked back into the little shop, and sat down on the chair Duan Kai Shan vacated.

That face is still just as cold, and remained silent, as he had been since coming into the shop.

After a few minutes, another person with a yellow robe walked into the shop.

This person is older, with one ear cut off, one eye blinded, his face filled with rage.

He also has gold streaks on the side of his robe, also has some people following behind him, some tall, some short, some old, some young.

From their appearances, these are fairly important people, except their faces look just like Duan Kai Shan and the others, following the yellow-robed man to the door, then stood inside those circles.

One of them has a dark skin and is very skinny, his face looks terrible.

When the others saw him, they look at him in a weird way, as if wondering why he's here.

The one-eyed man looked at Duan Kai Shan and the others for a sec, chuckled, then went into the little shop, sitting across from the youngster.

They looked at each other, nodded, but stayed silent.

After a bit more time, another yellow-robed man came.

He's even older, his hair all white, his yellow robe also have streaks of gold, and behind are even more people.

From afar, he doesn't look too special, but up close, one can see that his face is green, which looks incredibly scary paired up with his white hair.

Not only is his face green, so are his hands.

Those people standing outside the door watched him as if watching a ghost. They all gasped for breath, some even shook.

Within an hour, all the circles outside the shop had been filled, all with stiff people who do not dare speak or move.

Four people with gold-streaked yellow robes arrived, the last one an old man who looked quite fragile, and even older than the last one, like he's too old to even walk. But the people he brought just happened to be the most.

These four people each sat on a side of the table, sitting there silently.

The people outside are just as silent, as one can only hear their breaths.

This little shop seemed to have turned into a graveyard. Even Hunchback Sun couldn't stand it! Yet that old man and his granddaughter still did not leave.

Can they still be waiting for more tricks?

This really is a trick to die for!

Chapter 28: Coins That Take Lives

After a long time, a sound of du, du, du, du... came from down the street, the sound monotonous and sullen.

Yet this sound coming at this time of the night has an eerie feel to it, as if pounding everyone's heart with a stick.

Du, du, du... almost can drive people insane.

The four yellow-robed men looked at each, then stood up together.

In the darkness of the night appeared a shadow of a man.

This man's left leg is broken, he's using a crutch.

As the dim light in the shop shine on the man's face, one sees disorganized hair everywhere, face black as a kettle, filled with cuts.

Triangle eyes[don't know what this means], big eyebrows, huge nose, huge mouth, a face ridiculously ugly even without the cuts.

Anyone would be disgusted by this sight.

Yet the four yellow-robed men simply went up to him, and

bowed.

The one-legged man waved them off.

Du, du, du... the man walked into the shop.

Hunchback Sun saw that he's also wearing a yellow robe, gold strips down the side of his robe.

The thin man also saw him coming in, his expression changed.

That ponytailed girl had long turned her head away, afraid to look at him.

The one-legged man scanned the room, his eyes brightened a bit when he got to the thin man, then said to the others, "You've been working hard."

Although he looks scary, his voice is very nice.

The four yellow-robed men said together, "It's nothing."

The one-legged man said, "They're all here?"

A yellow-robed man said, "Total of forty-nine people. All here."

The one-legged man said, "Are you certain they're here for that thing?"

The old yellow-robed man said, "I have confirmed this. They all came within the last three days, so it must be for that. Or why else would they come here?"

The one-legged man nodded, said, "It's fine as long as

you've thoroughly investigated them, so we don't want to hurt any innocents."

The old yellow-robed man said, "Of course."

The one-legged man said, "So do these people understand?"

The old yellow-robed man said, "Not yet."

The one-legged man said, "Then we should make them understand."

"Yes."

He walked out the door, then said, "I'm sure everyone here knows who we are. As for your intentions for coming here, we also know that quite well."

He continued, "I believe you all received the same letter, and that's why you all came."

Those people can't nod, and they're afraid that they may say the wrong words. So no one responded.

The yellow-robed old man said, "But considering your abilities, you don't deserve to come. That's why you're all standing here. Until we're finished with our business, to insure everyone's safety, just stand still, and no harm will come to you."

He chuckled, "I'm sure everyone knows, that unless we absolutely have to, we won't hurt anyone."

When he said this, someone suddenly coughed.

That person is Hu Mei.

Because she doesn't want to make her waist look big, she'd rather freeze than to wear thicker clothing. This is a bad habit that most women share.

Not only did she wear very little, there just happened to be a lot of wind outside today, plus she's standing in the front, getting the brunt of the wind. No wonder she caught a cold.

As she sneezed, the coin on her head dropped to the ground.

Only to hear a clank sound, as the coin hit the ground and rolled away. Not only did her face turn pale, so did everyone else's.

The yellow-robed old man said, "Do you know our rules?"

Hu Mei stuttered, "Y... Yes."

The yellow-robed old man shook his head. "Then you really should be more careful."

Hu Mei's whole body shook. "It was an accident. Please spare me."

The yellow-robed old man said, "I also know it was an accident, but I can't break the rules. Who would follow the rules if people can keep breaking them? You've been around the block, you should know this."

Hu Mei turned around, looking at Hu Fei. "Big brother, you... won't help me out?"

Hu Fei closed his eyes, his muscles stiffened, "What can I do?"

Hu Mei smiled. "I know... I won't blame you."

Her eyes moved towards Yang Cheng Zu, "What about you, little Yang? I'm about to leave, don't you have something you want to say to me?"

Yang Cheng Zu's eyes simply stared down on the ground, without an expression.

Hu Mei said, "You won't even look at me?"

Yang Cheng Zu closed his eyes.

Hu Mei suddenly laughed, pointing at Yang Cheng Zu. "Everyone, look at this. This is my lover. Last night he told me, as long as I love him, he's willing to die for me. But now? Now he won't even look at me, as if looking at me will give him a disease..."

Her laughter gradually died down, but tears rolled down her eyes. "What is affection? What is love? What do I have to live for now? It really is better to die now than to go on living."

When she said this, her body suddenly rolled on the ground, quickly covered several yards, releasing numerous Ice Stars as she rolled, all flying towards the yellow-robed old man.

Her body levitated quickly, trying to get over the wall.

Hu Mei's specialties are hidden weapons and lightness kung fu, her abilities in these areas really are quite excellent, firing many stars, each quick, accurate, and deadly!

The yellow-robed old man simply raised his eyebrows a bit,

then said, "Why do you bother..."

He might walk and talk slowly, but he certainly can move very fast. When he finished the sentence, he had captured all the Ice Stars into his sleeves.

As Hu Mei tried to get over the wall, she felt a huge amount of energy rushing towards her, causing her to crash into the wall, then dropped to the ground, all parts of her body started to bleed.

The yellow-robed man said, "You could've had a painless death, but unfortunately..."

Hu Mei's hand held her chest, coughing continuously, coughing blood.

The yellow-robed man said, "But before you die, I can grant you a wish."

Hu Mei asked, "This is also one of your rules?"

"Yes."

"No matter what I ask for, you'll do it?"

The old man said, "If you have some unfinished business, we can do it for you. If you need revenge, we'll carry out the revenge for you!"

He chuckled, then said, "So anyone who dies in our hands can be considered quite lucky."

Hu Mei's eyes suddenly brightened, said, "Since I must die, can I choose someone to kill me?"

The yellow-robed old man said, "That should be no problem. Who do you have in mind?"

Hu Mei bit her lips, then said, "Him, Yang Cheng Zu!"

Yang Cheng Zu's face immediately became pale, said, "What's the meaning of this? Do you want to kill me?"

Hu Mei said, "Although you only pretended to have feelings for me, I actually do have feelings for you. As long as I die in your hands, I'll die a happy person."

The yellow-robed man said, "It's easy to kill someone, don't tell me you've never killed before."

He moved his hand a bit, a knife came out. Then he walked over and gave it to Yang Cheng Zu. "This knife is very sharp. It won't need a second slice to kill someone."

Yang Cheng Zu instinctively shook his head, said, "I don't..."

Just as he said those words, the coin on his head dropped to the ground and rolled away."

Yang Cheng Zu's whole body stiffened.

Hu Mei began to laugh without abandon. "You told me, if I died, you would not live on. Now you really are going to die with me. At least you still have a shred of conscience left."

Yang Cheng Zu started to shake, and then suddenly yelled, "You *****! You heartless..."

He immediately grabbed that knife, walked over and sliced off Hu Mei's head, blood pouring on his body.

He finally calmed down, raised his head back up.

Everyone just stared at him coldly.

Yang Cheng Zu stomped the ground with his feet, then cut his own throat with the same knife, his body falling on top of Hu Mei's.

Now Hunchback Sun knows why those people walk and stand in such a weird way.

These yellow-robed men's rules are not just scary, but also uncalled-for.

That thin man didn't seem to care at all, as if this sort of thing happens all the time.

At this time, the one-legged man stood up, walked over to that thin man's table, sitting down across from him.

The thin man slowly raised his head, staring at him intently.

They did not speak, but Hunchback Sun felt that something big is going to happen.

These two people's eyes are like knives, trying to stab the other's heart.

After who knows how long, the one-legged man smiled.

His smile is very unique, very strange. It can make people forget just how ugly he is, because it feels so warm and tender.

He said with a smile, "I know who you are now."

The thin man said, "Really?"

The one-legged man said, "I bet you know who we are too."

"In the past two years, I'd assume that there aren't many people who don't know you."

The one-legged man chuckled, then took out a letter.

This looks like a regular letter, but Hunchback Sun couldn't help but want to know what's in it.

The one-legged man said, "I bet you came all the way here because of this letter too, right?"

The thin man said, "Maybe"

The one-legged man said, "From what I heard, over a hundred people received this letter, but no one knows who wrote it. Despite much investigation, I could not get any leads."

The thin man said, "If you can't find any info about it, then no one can!"

The one-legged man said, "But although we don't know who wrote it, we do know its intent."

"Really?"

The one-legged man said, "He tried to get the famous fighters here, fight over this treasure, so he can gain something."

The thin man said, "If that's the case, then why are you still here?"

The one-legged man said, "It's simply because this is such a deadly plan, that we have to come."

"Really?"

The one-legged man smiled. "We came so we can tell everyone of his intent, so they would not fall into this trap."

The thin man said, "In that case, you're being a humanitarian now."

The one-legged man didn't seem to catch the sarcasm in his voice, said, "We just want to turn a big problem into a small one. A small problem into no problem, and everyone can live a happy life."

The thin man said, "Actually, no one's certain whether there really is a treasure here or not."

The one-legged man said, "That's why it would be quite sad if someone were to lose his life over this."

The thin man said, "But since I am here, I might as well see what's really going on. So how could someone persuade me to leave with just a few words?"

The one-legged man's face immediately became serious, said, "So you definitely won't leave?"

The thin man laughed coldly, "Even if I leave, it still won't be in your hands!"

The one-legged man said, "Other than you, I really don't know who can compete with us."

He pushed his iron crutch down, and after a cracking sound, the two-meter stick now has one and a half meters under the ground.

The thin man said coldly, “Really is great kung fu. No wonder in Bai Xiao Sheng’s Book of Weapons, your Iron Crutch is ranked eighth.”

The one-legged man said loudly, “Your famous Snake Whip is ranked number seven, so I’ve always wanted to see it!”

The thin man said, “I’ve also been looking forward to this fight!”

Chapter 29: The Whip with Eyes

Only to see the thin man's left hand hit the table, his body rise into the air, the wind breeze by, a shiny black whip appeared in his right hand.

He flicked his wrist, the long whip carried the wind through the heads of the people standing outside, only to hear sounds of ding ding dang dang, as over forty coins dropped to the ground.

These forty-some people are all very experienced in the martial world, yet none of them had ever seen such intricate use of a whip.

When the whip is in his hand, it seems to be alive, and has a pair of eyes.

Those forty-some people looked at each other, then immediately applied their lightness kung fu, some dashed down the street, some climbed over the walls, the sky filled with shadows of people. In an instant, everyone had left.

That yellow-robed old man's face became pale. He said angrily, "You took their Life Taking Coins. Do you wish to die for them?"

The one-legged man coldly laughed. "The God of Whips

XiMen Rou's life certainly is good enough to replace those lives!"

He pulled out his crutch, standing on one leg, but it's as if that one leg is nailed to the ground, as it is solid as a tree trunk.

The yellow-robed old man stretched out his hands, an Official Brush appeared.

Anyone who uses this type of weapon must have incredible kung fu.

Four people surrounded XiMen Rou.

Only that one-eyed man retreated a few steps, opened up his robe, showing forty-nine spearheads, some long, some short.

The five people's eyes all fell on XiMen Rou's long whip, all seem weary of it.

The one-legged man laughed. "I'm sure you have figured out who my four friends are."

XiMen Rou said, "I figured it out a long time ago."

The one-legged man said, "From a fairness standpoint, the five of us really shouldn't fight you alone, but today's different."

XiMen Rou laughed. "I've seen way too many people in the martial world win through superior numbers. Do you think I care about that?"

The one-legged man said, "I didn't want to kill you

originally, but you did break our rules. So how can we let you go? If rules are allowed to be broken, then we'd be considered liars, so I hope you understand."

XiMen Rou said, "What if I intend on leaving?"

The one-legged man said, "You can't leave!"

XiMen Rou suddenly laughed. "When I really do want to leave, the five of you certainly aren't going to stop me!"

The one-legged man grunted, his crutch slashing out.

Although this is a very simple move, its power is limitless!

XiMen Rou still kept his smile, his whip twisting even faster, as his person rise high above the ground.

That one-eyed man stretched his arms, thirteen spearheads came out, carrying the windy breeze towards XiMen Rou.

The longer ones were thrown first, but the shorter ones were faster, only to hear many clicking sounds, as the whip deflected all thirteen spearheads.

Like a tornado, XiMen Rou floated higher and higher, then twisted off into the distance, out of sight.

The one-legged man said, "After him!"

Hitting the ground softly with his iron crutch, the one-legged man also floated into the air, His lightness kung fu is amazingly better than most two-legged people, disappeared out of sight.

The other four yellow-robed men immediately followed, and

suddenly the shop became quiet again, with only two dead bodies left.

If it weren't for these two bodies, Hunchback Sun would've thought that this was all a bad dream.

Only to see that old man somehow awaken, his look seemingly without a hint of being drunk. He looked at where the yellow-robed men disappeared into, then sighed. "No wonder XiMen Rou's Snake Whip is ranked ahead of Yi Ku's Green Devil Hand. From the moves he showed, he certainly deserves the title 'God of Whips'. Bai Xiao Sheng really does know what he's talking about."

The ponytailed girl said, "Is he really the best among the people who uses whips today?"

The old man said, "The skill he has shown is unmatched by any other practitioner of soft weapons in the past thirty years."

The ponytailed girl asked, "What about that one-legged man?"

The old man responded, "He's called ZhuGe Gang. The people in the martial world call him 'Sweep Across Thousand Soldiers'. His Golden Steel Crutch weighs seventy pounds, the heaviest of any weapon in the martial world."

The ponytailed girl laughed. "One is called XiMen Rou. The other is ZhuGe Gang. They really are born to be enemies*."

*Note: 'Rou' means soft. 'Gang' means Hard. As you can see, their names reflect the type of weapons they use.

That old man took out some silver, put it on the table, and

then walked out the door with his granddaughter, into the night.

Hunchback Sun watched their backs as they left, then looked back, realizing that somehow, the drunkard had also awakened, and has walked over to the seat where XiMen sat. He picked up the letter ZhuGe Gang left.

Hunchback Sun smiled. "You really shouldn't have been drunk today, because you missed out on a pretty nice show."

That drunkard laughed, and then sighed. "The real show hasn't even begun yet, I'm afraid I'll be watching even if I don't want to."

Hunchback Sun raised his eyebrows. He found that these people have all been acting strangely today, like they all took the wrong medicine.

That drunkard took out the letter, looked at it for a second, then his face suddenly turned red, bent down and started to cough again.

Hunchback Sun asked, "What does the letter say?"

That drunkard said, "No...nothing."

Hunchback Sun said, "I heard they all came because of the letter."

"Really?"

Hunchback Sun smiled. "They also said something about some treasure. Whatever, they have got to be kidding me."

He then asked, "You want more wine? It's on me."

He didn't hear any response, turned around, and saw that the drunkard simply stood there, looking into the distance.

His eyes showed no sign of alcohol, but a strange elegance.

Hunchback Sun followed his line of sight, only to see a lone candle from afar, seemingly even further away because of the fog...

By the time Hunchback Sun returned to the backyard, it's already midnight.

It's always peaceful in the courtyard, the drunkard's light is still on, but the door is open, waving as the wind blows by.

Hunchback Sun went over to take a look, knocking on the door asking, "Hey, are you asleep?"

No sound came.

What's he doing outside at this hour?

Hunchback Sun walked inside, found out that the room in a mess, pieces of wood laying everywhere, but that little dagger is nowhere to be seen, half a jug of wine still sits on the table.

A crumpled piece of paper lay on the side.

Hunchback Sun recognize it as the letter ZhuGe Gang left.

He couldn't help but read it.

"September 15th. Happy Cloud Manor has treasure to show. Hope you can come take a look."

Just those three phrases, nothing else. The less written in the letter, the more mysterious and attractive it becomes.

The person who wrote this letter certainly knows psychology.

Hunchback Sun raised his eyebrows, a strange expression appeared on his face.

He knows that Happy Cloud Manor is the mansion across from him, but can't figure out just what kind of relationship that drunkard has with the manor.

Chapter 30: Long, Long Night

Fog fills the night, few leaves remain on the trees, lotus pond filled with dried leaves, the grass by the path all brown. In the past the flowers were red, and the trees green, the smell of plum filled the pavilion, but none still remain. At the end of the little bridge is a little house, the Cold Fragrance Hut*.

Here lived the top hero in the martial world, and the most beautiful woman in the world; back then, the plum flowers blossomed, its smell alluring.

But now, cobwebs filled the corners, dust gathered on the windows, nothing remained, even the old plum trees had dried up.

Deep in the darkness of the night, a shadow appeared.

His hair disorganized, his clothing messed up, look like a street bum, but his expression still graceful, his eyes bright as the stars.

He walked over the bridge, saw the old plum tree, and sighed. The plum trees used to be his friends, but has since withered as he had.

Then like a sparrow he shot up!

The window on the top floor of the little building is closed.

But there are many slashes on the window. From these slits one can see that lonely person, facing towards the candle, sewing.

Her face pale, even her beautiful eyes cannot retain its magnetism of the past.

She has no expression, looks very cold, as if she had forgotten all happiness, and all sadness.

She simply sits there, sewing, withering away.

Tears in clothing can be mended, but the tears in one's heart cannot...

At the other side of the room is a boy around thirteen or fourteen.

He looks very smart, a pair of eyes that makes him look even smarter, but his face is pale, so pale one almost forget that he's a kid.

He's practicing writing.

Although he's young, he has already learned to withstand loneliness.

That withered man stood outside, watching them.

Tears flowed down his eyes.

After who know how long, that child stopped writing, raised his head, and began to stare at the candle flame.

That housewife also stopped sewing, looking at her son, her face filled with unlimited tenderness, and softly asked, "Xiao Yun, what are you thinking about?"

The kid bit his lips, said, "I was just thinking about when dad is coming back."

The housewife's hand shook, the needle stabbed her finger. But she seemingly felt no pain, for all the pain resides in her heart. That kid said, "Mom. Why did dad suddenly leave? It's been two years, and still no word of him."

The housewife remained silent for a long time, and then softly sighed. "I didn't even know why he left."

That kid suddenly showed a strange expression of hatred, said, "But I know why he left."

The housewife said softly, "You're still a kid. What do you know?"

That kid said, "Of course I know. Dad left because he's afraid that Li Xun Huan will come back for revenge. If he so much as hear Li Xun Huan's name, his expression would change."

The housewife wanted to say something, but only let out a sigh instead.

She realizes that this kid knows a lot of things, perhaps too much.

That kid continued, "But Li Xun Huan never came, why hasn't he come to see mom?"

The housewife's whole body shook. She said loudly, "Why

would he come to see me?"

The kid smiled. "I know he and mom have always been great friends, right?"

The housewife's face became pure white. She frowned. "The sun is about to rise. Shouldn't you go to sleep now?"

The kid blinked his eyes, said, "I won't sleep. I want to accompany mom, because for the past two years, mom had not slept well at all."

The housewife closed her eyes, tears poured down.

That kid stood up and started to smile. "But I do need to go sleep now. Tomorrow is mom's birthday, I need to get up early..."

He walked over to the housewife and gave her a kiss on the forehead, then said, "Mom should also go to sleep. I'll see you tomorrow."

He smiled as he walked out the door, but once outside, his smile disappeared, replaced by a venomous expression. "Li Xun Huan, everyone else is afraid of you, but I'm not. One of these days, you're going to die in my hands."

The housewife's eyes followed the kid out the door, filled with sorrow, filled with tenderness. This really is a smart son.

She only has this one son.

This son is her life, even if he did something that made her sad or angry, she would still love him wholeheartedly.

The love of a mother to her kid is always limitless, always

unconditional.

She sat down again, made the light even brighter.

Every night when it's almost dawn, she would feel especially gloomy.

A sound of light coughing came from outside the window.

Her expression changed again.

Her whole person seemingly became a piece of wood, unable to move, simply looking out the window. Her eyes carried a hint of joy, but also a hint of sorrow...

After who know how long, she slowly got up, walked over to the window, and with a hand still shaking, opened the window slowly. She asked loudly, "Who's there?"

Not even a hint of a shadow below.

The housewife looked around, then said, "I know you're here. Since you're here, why don't come see me?"

No sound, no response.

That housewife took a deep breath, then said, "I don't blame you for not wanting to see me. We really wronged you..."

Her voice became softer and softer, then basically stood there aimlessly for a long time, before closing the window.

The ground has been fully covered by darkness.

The moments before dawn is always the darkest.

But darkness always eventually passes, as a hint of light appeared from the east. A shadow appeared from the back of a tree.

He had been standing still for a long time, his hair, clothing, all seemingly soaked with tears.

His eyes never did leave the window. He looks so old, withered, fragile...

He is the same person as the one who appeared here last night, the same one who was perpetually drunk at Hunchback Sun's shop!

He did not speak, but his heart kept reaching out.

Shi Yin, Shi Yin, you never did anything wrong, it's me who wronged you...

Although I couldn't see your face, but for the past two years, I was by your side the whole time, protecting you. Do you realize that?

The sky is getting brighter.

This person's hand held his mouth, trying to suppress a cough.

Then, he walked in front of the door.

The door wasn't locked, so he pushed it open.

Once opened, the stench of alcohol filled his nose. The room is dirty and disorganized, a man sleeping on the table, holding a wine bottle.

Another drunkard.

He smiled, and knocked the door.

The drunkard finally awoke, raised his head, and revealed a face full of freckles.

No one would ever believe that he's Lin Xian Er's dad.

Still not sober, he looked around and said, "Why would anyone come by this early in the morning? Run into a ghost or something?"

Only after he finished saying this did he see the middle-aged man. "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

The middle-aged man smiled. "We met two years ago. Don't you remember me?"

The freckled man looked at him, then said in surprise, "You're Li..."

Before he can get on his knees, the middle-aged man lifted him back up. "It's a good thing you still recognize me. Come, let's sit down and chat a bit."

The freckled man smiled. "How could I not recognize you, master*. I promise it won't happen again. But, master you've gotten older the past two years."

*Note: The 'master' here doesn't necessarily mean that Li Xun Huan is his master. It's a generic term any servant would use to refer to his master's friends, who would be above his own social level.

The middle-aged man felt a bit of gratitude, said, "You also got older. Everyone's getting older. So how have you been

the past two years?”

The freckled man said, “In front of others, I might boast a little bit, but in front of master you...”

He sighed. “To be honest, I have no idea how I lived through the past two years. Today I sell some paintings. Tomorrow I sell some furniture...”

The middle-aged man raised his eyebrows. “Is it so bad that there’s no more money here?”

The freckled man lowered his head.

The middle-aged man said, “Are you telling me that when Fourth Master Long left, he didn’t leave any money to sustain the household?”

The freckled man shook his head, his eyes red.

The middle-aged man’s face looked even paler, began to cough continuously.

The freckled man said, “The Lady originally had some jewelry, but her heart’s too kind. She gave the money to the servants, so they can find some business to do outside... She’d rather burden herself than the servants.”

When he said this, his voice croaked somewhat.

The middle-aged man remained silent for a long time, then asked, “But you didn’t leave. You really are a faithful person.”

The freckled man smiled. “I just didn’t have any place to go to.”

The middle-aged man said, "You don't have to explain. I know that while some people have a bad temper, their heart is good, but few people understand them."

The freckled man's face turned red, forced a smile. "This wine isn't really good, but if master doesn't mind, why don't you have some?"

Only when he tried to pour the wine did he find that the bottle is empty.

The middle-aged man smiled. "I don't really want to drink any wine, just some tea... Don't you find it odd, that I would want to drink tea? I haven't done this for so many years."

The freckled man also smiled. "This is easy to do. I'll just go boil some water to prepare your tea."

The middle-aged man said, "No matter who you see, don't tell them I'm here."

The freckled man said, "Don't worry, master. I'll keep your secret."

He cheerfully walked out, even forgetting to lock the door.

The middle-aged man frowned, talking to himself. "Shi Yin, Shi Yin, you've been through so much pain because of me. I must protect you. I won't let anyone hurt you!"

The sun shined through the window, it's very bright already.

The tealeaves aren't good at all.

But as long as the tea is thick, people can drink it. This is

just like women, as long as they're young, one won't find them disgusting.

The middle-aged man slowly drank the tea, then suddenly laughed. "I used to have a very smart friend, who said something very witty."

The freckled man laughed with him. "Master, you're very witty too."

The middle-aged man said, "He* told me, 'There are no wine that can't make you drunk, and there are no ugly young women.' He also said, 'It's because of these two things that I kept on living.'"

His eyes filled with laughter. "Actually, the good wines are the ones that has been sitting for a long time, the good women are the older ones because they have more flavor."

The freckled man didn't comprehend everything, so he didn't respond, instead pouring more tea. "What's the reason for master to come back?"

The middle-aged man sat there for a long time before responding, "Someone said, there's a treasure here..."

The freckled man laughed. "Treasure? I wish there really is a treasure here."

He suddenly stopped laughing, his eyes stared at the middle-aged man, asking, "If there are any treasures, I'm sure master would know, right?"

The middle-aged man sighed. "Although you and I don't believe this rumor, apparently a lot of people do."

The freckled man asked, "Who's spreading this rumor? Why?"

The middle-aged man said, "He did it for two reasons. One is to get some greedy people to come and fight each other, so he would get something out of that."

The freckled man said, "Any other reasons?"

The middle-aged man said, "It's been a while since I've appeared. Many people wish to know my whereabouts. Whoever did this obviously want me to appear."

The freckled man said, "What's wrong with that? They'll get to see just how amazing you are."

The middle-aged man said, "But this time, there are some people even I can't handle."

The freckled man was amazed. "You mean there are people in this world even you're afraid of?"

Before he got the answer, a loud knock came from outside, a voice screaming, "Is this where Fourth Master Long lives? We are here to pay a visit."

The freckled man said, "Strange. We haven't had any visitors for the past two years. I wonder who they are?"

After about an hour, the freckled man came back chuckling. "Today is the Lady's birthday, even I forgot, yet these people remembered, and brought gifts too."

The middle-aged man thought for a while, and then asked, "Who are these people?"

The freckled man said, "Five people came. A very stylish old man, a handsome youngster, a one-eyed man, plus a very ugly green-faced man."

The middle-aged man said, "And the fifth person is a one-legged man, right?"

The freckled man nodded. "That's right... How do you know? Do you know who they are?"

The middle-aged man lightly coughed, his eyes sharper than knife.

But the freckled man didn't seem to notice, and continued to smile. "Although these people look strange, their gifts are certainly amazing. We've never had presents like these even when Fourth Master Long was here."

"Really?"

"One of the gift is a coin made of pure gold, at least 6 pounds. I've never seen anyone this extravagant before."

The middle-aged man raised his eyebrows, asked, "Did the Lady accept the gifts?"

The freckled man said, "She didn't want to originally, but those people just sat in the living room and won't leave, saying they want to see the Lady, that they're friends of Fourth Master Long. The Lady doesn't know what to do, so she sent the young master to greet them."

He smiled. "Master, while the young master is still young, he certainly knows how to talk to people, sometimes even better than adults. All of those guests complimented on his intelligence."

The middle-aged man stared at his tea. "I wonder if there will be more people coming, more people who would dare to come."

ZhuGe Gang, Gao Xing Kong, Yan Shuang Fei, Tang Du, and ShangGuan Fei all sat in that large living room, talking to a kid in a red robe.

Although these are some of the best fighters in the martial world, they did not seem to look down on the kid at all.

Only ShangGuan Fei sat there quietly, not speaking a word, as if nothing in this world can make him speak.

ZhuGe Gang said with a smile, "Young master really is amazing. Your potential is limitless. In the future when you become a famous hero, I hope you'll remember us old folks."

That kid also spoke with a smile, "If I can only be half as successful as elders, I'd be satisfied. But I'll certainly need elders' guidance in the future."

ZhuGe Gang clapped his hands. "Young master really knows how to talk. No wonder Fourth Master Long..."

He suddenly stopped talking, and looked out onto the yard outside.

That freckled man came in again, with a person behind him, wearing black robe, black pants, black shoes, and carries a long, black sword on his back.

He is a big and muscular person, almost twice as big as the freckled man. His face carried an expression of death, his

eyes striking, his beard flowing with the wind.

He looks arrogant, but also graceful, stern, but also unruly.

Anyone who sees him will know that he is not a regular person.

The five people looked at each other, as if trying to figure out his identity.

That red kid got up from his chair, walked up to him and bowed. "Nice of you to visit. My name is Long Xiao3 Yu..."

The black-robed man looked at him. "So you are Long Xiao4 Yun's son?"

Long Xiao3 Yun said, "Yes. I take it that elder is a friend of father. Could I have your name?"

The black-robed man said, "Even if I tell you, you won't recognize it."

He walked into the room.

ZhuGe Gang got up and bowed. "I am..."

He just said two words before the black-robed man cut him off. "I know who you are, and you don't need to try and figure out my identity."

ZhuGe Gang said, "But..."

The black-robed man cut him off again. He said in an icy tone, "I came for a different reason from you. I just came to watch."

ZhuGe Gang smiled. "I'm very glad, if that's the case. When we're finished with our business here, we will certainly thank you."

The black-robed man said, "I don't interfere with you. You don't interfere with me. Let's just mind our own business. No need to thank me."

He found a chair, sat down, closed his eyes, and rested.

The five people looked at each other.

Gao Xing Kong smiled. "I heard the backyard is very famous. I wonder if the young master can show us around."

Long Xiao3 Yun sighed. "Unfortunately, the backyard has withered..."

Gao Xing kong said, "Oh, that doesn't matter. We just want to take a look."

Long Xiao3 Yun said, "If that's the case, then follow me."

A line of people walked through the yard.

First one is Long Xiao3 Yun, the last one is the black-robed man, his eyes half-open half-closed, his hands in his sleeves, as if trying to conserve energy.

Long Xiao3 Yun pointed at a forest of withered plum trees, said, "That's the Cold Fragrance Hut over there."

Yan Shuang Fei's eyes brightened. "I heard Little Li Tan Hua used to reside there."

Long Xiao3 Yun lowered his head. "That's right."

Yan Shuang Fei held his spearheads, let out a cold laugh.
“He has flying dagger, I have flying spear, if I could duel with him one of these days, it would be quite fun.”

The black-robed man said from afar, “If you really can duel with him, then that would truly be a miracle.”

Yan Shuang Fei turned around quickly, staring angrily at him.

Chapter 31: Little Li's Flying Dagger

When Long Xiao3 Yun saw Yan Shuang Fei's angry attitude, he hurriedly said, "His flying dagger is just made out of regular iron. It's not some holy weapon, but people always seem to describe it that way. Sometimes even I find it ridiculous."

The black-robed man said calmly, "I heard he wasted your kung fu, I bet you still hate him for that, right?"

Long Xiao3 Yun said with a smile, "Uncle Li is my elder. How can I be mad when an elder teaches me a lesson? Besides, a person doesn't always need kung fu to become famous."

The black-robed man stared at him, seemingly unable to see into his thoughts.

ZhuGe Gang clapped his hands. "Excellent! You're certainly correct. You really are worthy of being Long Xiao4 Yun's son."

Long Xiao3 Yun bowed. "Elder, you are too kind."

ShangGuan Fei suddenly said, "I heard Lin Xian Er also lived here, right?"

He really did open his mouth, even Long Xiao3 Yun was caught off guard. "That's right."

ShangGuan Fei asked, "Where did she go?"

Long Xiao3 Yun answered, "Auntie Lin suddenly disappeared two years ago, didn't even take her jewelry or clothing. No one knew where she went, some said Ah Fei kidnapped her, others said Ah Fei killed her."

ShangGuan Fei raised his eyebrows, then stopped talking.

The line of people walked over the bridge, arrived at the Cold Fragrance Hut.

ZhuGe Gang's eyes brightened, as if very interested in this building.

Gao Xing Kong asked, "So what about this place? Is this where your mother lives?"

"Yes."

Gao Xing Kong said, "We originally came to give presents for your mother's birthday, so can we go up there to meet her?"

Long Xiao3 Yun rolled his eyes, smiled. "Mother usually don't like to meet guests, so can I go ask her first?"

Gao Xing Kong said, "Certainly."

Long Xiao3 Yun walked slowly upstairs.

Tang Du smiled. "It would really be a wonder if a kid like him can live long."

ZhuGe Gang's smile disappeared, said seriously, "Are you sure this is the place?"

Gao Xing Kong responded in a low voice, "I studied that letter over and over last night, the Li family treasure is in here alright. I heard they have been high level officials for many generations, that their wealth is unmatched."

As he spoke, he kept looking at the black-robed man.

The black-robed man stood far away, looking at two crickets fighting on the ground, as if he doesn't care for these people at all.

ZhuGe Gang said, "The treasures aren't important, but we need Li Tan Hua's famous paintings and kung fu manuals."

Gao Xing Kong nodded, as Long Xiao3 Yun came down the stairs.

ZhuGe Gang smiled again, asking, "So what is your mother's response?"

Long Xiao3 Yun shook his head. "Mother's not upstairs."

ZhuGe Gang asked, "Then where is she?"

Long Xiao3 Yun said, "I'm also confused. Mother almost never leaves her room."

ZhuGe Gang said, "If that's the case, then we will wait for her upstairs."

Only to see three yellow-robed men quickly ran over here. "Please let us clean up the room first."

Long Xiao3 Yun seemingly wants to block their path, but was afraid to, finally let them go upstairs.

Only to hear a swoosh sound, a fifteen foot long* whip made three circles, each around a person's neck.

The long whip tightened, then loosened.

The first person didn't even let out a noise, before falling to the ground, dead.

The second person let an 'Ugh' sound, before also falling on the ground, dead.

The third person held his throat, walked forward a bit before falling down. His body kept shaking, unable to speak.

Although he did not die for a long time, his pain was ten times worse than dying.

The ability to strike down these three people at once shocked even ZhuGe Gang.

Only that black-robed man showed no surprise. He said, "It seems that the Snake Whip really is overrated."

He sighed deeply, looking extremely disappointed.

Had XiMen Rou unleashed the full potential of that move, all three people would have been dead immediately. The fact that these three people died at different times, in different ways, showed that XiMen Rou had not mastered his whip yet.

ZhuGe Gang's eyes brightened. "XiMen Rou. Yesterday you luckily escaped, but do you think you'll be that lucky today?"

XiMen Rou did not respond, but his whip lashed out.

The whip did not make a sound, only when it straightened out did one hear a pop, as if it traveled faster than the speed of sound.

At this moment, ZhuGe Gang leapt up, his iron crutch met the long whip in mid-air, the whip twisted around, squeezing the crutch like a snake.

Only to hear a loud thud, as the crutch hit the ground.

ZhuGe Gang's foot faced the sky, his whole body completely upside-down, twisting. The crutch twisted along.

The whip around the crutch tangled up more and more, becoming shorter and shorter, XiMen Rou also forced to move closer and closer, his long whip mostly twisted around the iron crutch now.

With XiMen Rou holding the whip with one hand, his strength is far less than ZhuGe Gang, who had the force of his whole body applied to his crutch.

His expression changed from pale to red, red to white, sweat poured down.

ZhuGe Gang yelled loudly, his reversed body lashed out.

This move looks just like his famous 'One Sweep Across Thousand Soldiers', except this time, his body acts as the crutch, his crutch acts as the body.

Had XiMen Rou released his whip at this time, he could have avoided the strike, but he became famous for his whip. How can he possibly release it at this time?

If he doesn't release his whip, he can only block ZhuGe Gang's kick with his left hand, which would break his left hand.

But XiMen Rou is one of the best of the best, so he didn't lose his cool even at this moment. He suddenly applied his lightness kung fu, and began to spin around the crutch.

He obviously want to untangle his whip, but ZhuGe Gang had already calculated this, also started to twist around, his foot only a bit behind XiMen Rou's body.

That black-robed man sighed again. "Looks like the Golden Iron Crutch is also overrated."

For had ZhuGe Gang timed it correctly, his kick would've already killed XiMen Rou by now.

Although this move was not executed perfectly, XiMen Rou is still in deep peril.

It still looks like he's about to die from ZhuGe Gang's kick.

Tang Du laughed. "Why do you bother to struggle when you're nearly dead? Here, let me help you out."

He pulled out his unique Mantis Saber, a ray of light flashed, the saber aimed towards XiMen Rou's back.

But just as he did this, his body suddenly lurched back, as if being hit by an invisible hand, he finally rested on the ground.

Even before he could speak, his breathing stopped! Because a dagger had struck his throat!

A seemingly ordinary dagger.

But everyone's expression changed.

ZhuGe Gang also saw this dagger, screamed in shock, "Little Li's Flying Dagger!"

This scream broke his concentration, making him twist the other way, unable to control.

XiMen Rou's wrist suddenly tightened, his Snake Whip twisted away from the crutch!

ZhuGe Gang flipped in mid-air, falling back a bit before regaining his balance.

Only to see a person appear from afar.

This person's clothing looks terrible, his hair disorganized, his face frail, but his eyes look sharper than knives.

ZhuGe Gang tightened his hold on the crutch, yelled, "Little Li Tan Hua?"

This person smiled. "You're too kind."

ZhuGe Gang said loudly, "Why do you take actions against us?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I never want to go against anyone, but I also don't anyone to bother me."

He played around with the dagger in his hand. "There are no treasures here. I'm sorry you've all wasted your time. Oh, and when you leave, please take your gifts too."

ZhuGe Gang, ShangGuan Fei, and Gao Xing Kong all stared intently at the dagger in his hand, as if they had something stuck in their throats, none could speak.

Yan Shuang Fei suddenly yelled angrily, “What if we don’t want to leave?”

Li Xun Huan smiled. “I think you should take my advice and leave.”

Yan Shuang Fei said, “I’ve always wanted to duel with you. Others might be afraid of you, but not me!”

He opened his coat, revealing two rows of spearheads.

But Li Xun Huan didn’t even so much as look at him.

Yang Shuang Fei yelled loudly, his hands shot out together, nine spearheads came out, but all of them fell to the ground before reaching Li Xun Huan.

As one look back at Yang Shuang Fei, he’s already on the ground, his throat added a shiny new dagger.

Little Li’s Flying Dagger!

No one saw when the dagger reached his throat, but probably just as he released his spears.

He couldn’t apply enough force to the spears, therefore they didn’t reach Li Xun Huan.

What a fast dagger!

Even in death, Yan Shuang Fei couldn’t believe there exist such a fast dagger in this world!

That black-robed man looked at Yan Shuang Fei's body, and revealed a smile. "I told you already, that you're not even in his class. Do you believe me now?"

He raised his head, looked at Li Xun Huan, said one word at a time, "Little Li's Flying Dagger did not disappoint me."

Li Xun Huan said, "And you are..."

The black-robed man cut him off. "I've long known Little Li Tan Hua's fame. I'm glad we could meet today..."

When he finished he suddenly lashed out.

Only to hear a 'loooong' sound, the sword left the sheath.

The sword itself is also pure black, with no shine. When it came out, dark sword stream is crushing.

Gao Xing Kong only felt a little chill as the silent sword came into his line of sight, the sword stream slicing into his eyes.

Just as he closed his eyes, the pain disappeared.

He fell to the ground.

ZhuGe Gang only saw the iron sword sweep across, and blood spilled from Gao Xing Kong's body. Gao Xing Kong did not even try to block the sword, nor evade.

The black-robed man's sword twisted around and swooped the other way.

Only to hear a 'dang' sound, the seventy-pound crutched broke in two, but the sword did not slow down!

ZhuGe Gang suddenly felt a little chill, but then the feeling disappeared.

He also fell down.

This all happened in less than a minute. XiMen Rou looked up at the sky and sighed. "Looks like there's no more place in the martial world for me anymore..."

He disappeared behind the rooftop.

At the same time, ShangGuan Fei also applied his lightness kung fu.

Because the sword stream rushed over to him.

ShangGuan Fei suddenly pulled out his Son-Mother Steel Ring, encircling the iron sword and blocking it.

The black-robed man said, "Good!"

As he said this, his sword shook, breaking the ring.

The sword tip stopped right in front of ShangGuan Fei's throat.

ShangGuan Fei closed his eyes, but his expression remained cold and calm, as if this youngster's heart is made of stone.

The black-robed man stared at him, then said coldly, "Are you a student of ShangGuan JinHong?"

ShangGuan Fei nodded.

The black-robed man said, "My sword had never left anyone

alive, but despite your youth, you could actually block my sword once. That's very impressive."

He removed his sword, and then tapped ShangGuan Fei's shoulders. "You can go!"

ShangGuan Fei did not move. He stared at the black-robed man and said, "You may not kill me, but I must tell you something."

The black-robed man said, "Go ahead."

ShangGuan Fei said, "Even though you let me go today, I will seek revenge in the future. At that time, I most certainly will not let you go!"

That black-robed man laughed. "Good. You really do deserve to be ShangGuan JinHong's son."

He stopped laughing, his eyes stared at ShangGuan Fei. "If I can die some day in your hands, not only will I not blame you, I will actually be happy, because I didn't misjudge you."

ShangGuan Fei's expressions did not change. "In that case, goodbye!"

The black-robed man said, "I'll be waiting for you!"

The black-robed man suddenly yelled again, "Hold on!"

ShangGuan Fei slowed down and then stopped.

The black-robed man said, "Remember this. I let you go today not because you're ShangGuan JinHong's son, but because you're you!"

ShangGuan Fei did not respond. He resumed walking, slowly out of sight.

The black-robed man waited till he disappeared, then turned around and faced Li Xun Huan. "I'm so glad we met today,"

Li Xun Huan stared at his sword, then suddenly asked, "Solar-Apex Iron Sword*?"

The black-robed man said, "I am indeed Guo Song Yang*."

*Note: Someone who made some playing cards of Gu Long characters translated 'Song Yang'(Guo Song Yang's first name) as Solar-Apex for the sword name. This translation doesn't seem too correct to me, but it does sound cool. Anyway, just keep in mind that the name of the iron sword is the same as the first name of its owner.

Li Xun Huan took a deep breath, said, "Solar-Apex Iron Sword really is as good as they say!"

Guo Song Yang looked at his own sword. "But I wonder how it does against Little Li's Flying Dagger."

Li Xun Huan chuckled. "Actually, I would rather not know the answer."

"Why?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Because... if we do try to find the answer, one of us will regret doing so."

Guo Song Yang raised his head.

A hint of gratitude appeared on his face. He said loudly, "But we'll need to know sooner or later, right?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I can only hope it's later."

Guo Song Yang said soundly, "But I prefer to know sooner."

"Really?"

Guo Song Yang said, "Until the day we figure out the winner, I will not rest peacefully."

Li Xun Huan thought for a while, then asked, "When do you want to settle this?"

Guo Song Yang said, "Today!"

Li Xun Huan asked, "Right here?"

Guo Song Yang looked around, then laughed coldly, "This used to be your home. If we fight here, you already have the advantage of knowing the surroundings."

Li Xun Huan chuckled. "You're right. Just by your last sentence, you truly deserve to be considered a top level fighter."

Guo Song Yang said, "But since I decided the time, you should decide the place."

Li Xun Huan said, "That won't be necessary."

Guo Song Yang also thought for a long time, then said, "Fine. If that's the case, follow me!"

Li Xun Huan said, "After you."

He walked forward a couple of steps, couldn't help but look back at the Cold Fragrance, and saw Long Xiao3 Yun staring

at him, his eyes filled with venom.

Nothing, not the marvelous Guo Song Yang's sword strokes, not the deaths of ZhuGe Gang and the others, moved this young kid.

But once he met Li Xun Huan's gaze, he instantly smiled, and bowed. "Uncle Li. How are you doing."

Li Xun Huan sighed inside, while smiling. "Hello."

Long Xiao3 Yun said, "Mother thinks of you at every moment, you really should come visit us more often."

Li Xun Huan forced a chuckle.

He almost always has trouble answering this kid.

Long Xiao3 Yun went up to him, grabbed his robe, and whispered, "That person looks scary. Uncle you shouldn't go with him."

Li Xun Huan said, "You'll understand once you grow up, sometimes you must do things that you would not want to do."

Long Xiao3 Yun said, "But... but... what if uncle you die, then who will take care of mom and I?"

Li Xun Huan froze.

After who knows how long, he raised his head, and saw Lin Shi Yin standing on top of the steps, looking at them.

She looked worrisome, but also showed much happiness.

Li Xun Huan only felt a stab in his heart, lowered his head again.

Long Xiao Yun yelled, "Mom. Look, Uncle Li just came, but now has to go."

Lin Shi Yin forced smile. "Uncle Li has business to attend to, he... he has to go."

Her smile looked so fragile, so forced, had Li Xun Huan saw this smile, his heart would've broke.

Long Xiao Yun said, "Mom, don't you have some things you want to say to Uncle Li?"

Lin Shi Yin's mouth kept trembling. "That can wait when he comes back."

Long Xiao Yun's lips curled up, and blinked his eyes. "But... I think once Uncle Li leaves today, he'll never come back."

Lin Shi Yin said in almost a whisper, "Shush! Come on back up so Uncle Li can leave."

Long Xiao Yun finally nodded, released Li Xun Huan's robe, and said, "You can go now, Uncle Li. Don't worry about us, mom and I are used to being alone anyway, you don't have to worry."

He wiped his eyes, seemingly on the verge of tears..

Guo Song Yang is already near the bridge, looking at them.

Li Xun Huan finally turned around.

He never did look up, nor said any words.

At this moment, any more words would be pointless.
Besides, he doesn't know what to say anyway.

If a person becomes too sentimental, he actually looks
heartless instead.

Outside the walls, the signs of autumn seem more apparent.

Both of Guo Song Yang's hands rest in his sleeves, he walked
slowly in the front.

Li Xun Huan followed behind.

The road is long, and quite narrow, with no end in sight.

The autumn wind blows by, leaves all turning into brown.

Although his steps are slow, Guo Song Yang's steps are wide.

Li Xun Huan stared intensely at his steps.

The ground is quite soft, so each step left a footprint, his
footprints all have the same depth, all equidistance apart.

Although he looks like he's just walking casually, he's
actually gathering a special type of inner energy, his whole
body harmonizing, which is why his steps are the same.

When he has gathered all his energy, when his body is in
perfect harmony, he will immediately stop... that is the end
of the road.

Chapter 32: The Understanding Mortal Enemy

Once there, one of their lives will end!

Li Xun Huan obviously realizes this.

Guo Song Yang really is an intimidating enemy.

In Li Xun Huan's whole life, perhaps this is the first time that he has met a truly worthy opponent.

Many fighters 'seek a loss' because they think that as long as they meet a worthy opponent, even if they lose, they would be happy.

But Li Xun Huan is not happy at all.

His heart is pounding.

He knows that in his current condition, he would most likely lose.

Once this road ends, so could his life!

This could be his road to the underworld.

He's not really afraid to die, but how can he die right now?

The surroundings became more and more barren, he can see a forest up ahead.

The autumn leaves as red as blood.

Could that be the end of the road?

Guo Song Yang's steps became bigger and bigger, his footprints shallower and shallower, showing that his inner and outer energy are combining to reach the apex.

At that time, his concentration, power, body, will all combine with his sword. At that time, his sword will no longer be a piece of metal, but will come alive.

At that time, the power of his sword will be limitless, nothing will stand in its way!

Li Xun Huan suddenly stopped walking.

He did not speak, or make any other noise, but Guo Song Yang noticed it.

He did not turn around, instead simply said, "Here?"

Li Xun Huan remained silent for a long time, then said, "Today... I can't fight you."

Guo Song Yang turned around, like daggers his eyes pierced into Li Xun Huan, he said loudly, "What did you say?"

Li Xun Huan lowered his head, his head ached.

He knows that this was a cowardly act, something he never

dreamed of doing.

But now he must do this.

Guo Song Yang said, "Did you say you can't fight me?"

Li Xun Huan could only nod.

Guo Song Yang asked, "Why?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Because I admit defeat."

Guo Song Yang looked at him in amazement, as if he's never met this person before.

After a long time, Guo Song Yang took a deep breath. "Li Xun Huan, Li Xun Huan, you really are a true hero!"

Li Xun Huan chuckled. "Hero? A man like me can be a hero?"

Guo Song Yang shook his head and sighed. "Perhaps you are the only true hero in this world!"

Li Xun Huan did not speak, as Guo Song Yang continued, "You just admitted defeat. I know how difficult this can be. It's something perhaps I would rather die than say."

He smiled and continued, "It's actually quite easy to die, but to admit defeat in order to help others, that's a sign of a true hero, a true man!"

Li Xun Huan said, "You..."

He only felt incredible warmth in his heart, and he couldn't finish his sentence.

Guo Song Yang said, "I understand you, you can't fight me because you still cannot die, because there are still people who rely on you."

Li Xun Huan still could not speak, but tears of joy almost came out from his eyes.

Sometimes, it's your best friend who can become your mortal enemy, while sometimes, it's your most fearful enemy who truly understands you.

Because only a worthy adversary is worthy of being your friend.

Because only a worthy adversary can truly understand how you feel.

Li Xun Huan doesn't know whether to be happy, sad, or gracious.

Guo Song Yang then said, "But we must fight today!"

Li Xun Huan was taken aback, "Why?"

Guo Song Yang smiled. "How many Li Xun Huans are there in the world? If we do not fight today, I might never again find another worthy opponent."

Li Xun Huan said, "Once I have taken care of my business, I will fight you any time you wish."

Guo Song Yang shook his head. "Unfortunately, by that time, we might not have another chance to fight."

Li Xun Huan asked, "Why?"

Guo Song Yang looked afar, he then said slowly and clearly, "By that time, we might already be friends."

Li Xun Huan thought for a long time. "You'd rather be my enemy than my friend?"

Guo Song Yang's face instantly became serious, he said loudly, "I have devoted my whole life to my sword, how could I have time to find friends? Besides..."

His voice became noticeably softer as he continued, "It's easy to find friends, but almost impossible to find a truly considerate and thoughtful enemy."

'Considerate and thoughtful' are words that tend to describe friends, so his usage here to describe an enemy seem quite strange.

But Li Xun Huan understands what he means.

Guo Song Yang said, "You are not the only person in the world who's my equal in fighting, but even if someone is ten times better than me, I still won't think much of him, and I don't think I'd die happily in his hands."

Li Xun Huan said, "You're right. It really is hard to find a considerate and thoughtful enemy."

Guo Song Yang said, "That's why we must fight today. Even if I die in your hands, I would have no regrets."

Li Xun Huan said, "But I..."

Guo Song Yang cut him off. "I know your feelings. If you die in my hands today, I will finish everything you could not complete. I would protect anyone you wish to protect."

Li Xun Huan looked at the ground, then said, "If that's the case, then I can certainly die without regret... Thank You."

He has never said the words 'thank you' before in his life. This 'thank you' came truly from the bottom of his heart.

Guo Song Yang said, "Thank you for granting me this duel. After you!"

Li Xun Huan said, "After you!"

It's not a big deal when a friend cares for you, but when an enemy does it, it's so much more special, so much more heartwarming.

Unfortunately, it's a feeling others will never experience!

The wind blew past by, carrying the dried leaves with it.

The air filled with stench of death.

Guo Song Yang pulled out his sword, held it at chest height, his eyes never left Li Xun Huan's hand.

This really is a scary hand.

Li Xun Huan had seemingly turned into a different person, his hair is still disorganized, his robe still ragged, but he no longer looked fragile!

His face brightened dramatically!

These past two years, Li Xun Huan's life is akin to a sword in the sheath, biding its time, not showing its full potential, its true nature!

But now, sword has come out!

As he held up his hand, a dagger appeared!

One dagger across the throat, the dagger that never misses,
Little Li's Flying Dagger!

Guo Song Yang's iron sword followed the wind, a streak of darkness quickly reaching Li Xun Huan's throat, in front of the sword is the sword stream, demolishing its surroundings.

Li Xun Huan's foot stepped lightly, his whole person quickly retreated ten meters, his back now touching a tree behind him.

Guo Song Yang's sword also changed directions, following his steps just as quickly.

Li Xun Huan could not retreat anymore, but his body suddenly shot up the tree.

Guo Song Yang flew into the sky, his sword followed like a streak of rainbow.

His body and sword are one.

The punishing sword stream pushed away all the leaves from the trees.

The scenery is just amazing!

Li Xun Huan flew past the sword stream, following the red leaves, floating down to the ground.

Guo Song Yang did not let up, back-flipped in mid-air, his sword suddenly turned into infinite streaks and shadows,

coming towards Li Xun Huan.

No one can deny the incredible power of this attack.

Even meters away, Li Xun Huan could feel the pressure of the surrounding sword stream, no matter which way he dodges, he will still be hit.

Only to hear a 'ding' sound, sparks flew.

Li Xun Huan's dagger hit perfectly into the tip of the sword.

The sword streams disappeared, the calm returned. Guo Song Yang stood there, still holding his sword.

Li Xun Huan still has his dagger, but the tip is now broken.

He looked silently at Guo Song Yang, Guo Song Yang also looked silently at him.

Neither showed any expressions.

But both of them know that Li Xun Huan's dagger can no longer leave his hand.

Little Li's Flying Dagger, fast as lightning. But after it's used to break apart the sword stream, the tip broke, greatly reducing its speed.

Even if the dagger leaves his hand, it can no longer harm people!

The dagger that has never lost, has now lost.

Li Xun Huan put his hands down.

After the last leaf fell, the forest became silent again.

As silent as death itself.

Although still expressionless, Guo Song Yang's eyes flickered. He said, "I lost!"

Li Xun Huan said, "Who says you lost?"

Guo Song Yang said, "I say I've lost."

He chuckled. "You know, I thought I'd die before I would ever say this, but now that I've said it, I feel great, feel great..."

He looked up at the sky and laughed.

In the midst of his laughter, he turned around and left the forest.

Li Xun Huan watched as he disappeared, then began to cough.

At this time, someone suddenly appeared, clapping. "Incredible. Amazing. Absolutely Amazing..."

The voice is crisp and clear.

Li Xun Huan raised his head, found that the speaker is that old storyteller's granddaughter.

Her big, bright eyes carried an innocent smile, said, "To be able to see today's fight, even I can die peacefully!"

Perhaps Li Xun Huan still doesn't feel like talking, so he did not respond.

The ponytailed girl said, "Once upon a time, Mr. Lan Da and Xiao Sun dueled at the peak of Mount Tai, Mr. Lan Da used a hundred pound Iron Hammer, while Xiao Sun simply used a silk belt, using soft to counter hard, and they fought for the whole night, some say they changed the night sky into day."

She chuckled. "Do you think this fight is amazing?"

Li Xun Huan also smiled, "The way young lady speaks about it, even I thought I was at Mt. Tai's peak, witnessing this great duel between Xiao Sun and Mr. Lan Da."

The ponytailed girl twitched her mouth. "I can't believe your mouth is even more powerful than your dagger."

Li Xun Huan said, "Really?"

The ponytailed girl said, "Although your dagger can take a man's life, but your words can take a lady's heart. Don't you think that it's much harder to receive a woman's heart than a man's life?"

With those big eyes looking at him, even Li Xun Huan could not help but feel drawn towards her. He never thought this young girl can be so intimidating.

She asked again, "So do you think this battle was amazing?"

Li Xun Huan doesn't dare to respond elaborately again, so he only smiled and nodded. "Quite amazing."

The ponytailed girl said, "Although this battle was very famous, and became a folklore, it's still nothing compared to the fight that just ended."

Li Xun Huan chuckled. "Although I'm not a humble person,

I'm at least not full of myself. Young lady you must be exaggerating."

The ponytailed girl said seriously, "I only said the truth. You had three chances to kill him, yet did not take his life at each opportunity. Eventually you lost your killer instinct, and the tip of your dagger. At this moment, Guo Song Yang could've killed you, but instead he admitted defeat..."

She sighed. "It's people like you who are real man. Had you killed him, or had he killed you, no matter how great your kung fu are, I still wouldn't have been impressed."

Li Xun Huan said, "You're right. Guo Song Yang really is a great hero."

"What about you?"

Li Xun Huan shook his head. "Me? I'm nothing."

The ponytailed girl said, "Let me ask you something. What was the first stroke he used?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Flowing Wind Twirls Cloud."

The ponytailed girl said, "What about the second stroke?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Shooting Stars Follow Moon."

The ponytailed girl said, "As he changed from 'Flowing Wind Twirls Cloud' to 'Shooting Stars Follow Moon', he switched too quickly, opening himself up in the process. If you had released your dagger at that moment, couldn't you have taken his life?"

Li Xun Huan could not respond.

Chapter 33: Shocking Conversation

The ponytailed girl said, "This was the first time you missed a chance at killing him. You want me to keep going?"

Li Xun Huan could only chuckle, "You don't have to."

The ponytailed girl said, "Everyone else says you're a true man, but you actually seem quite girly."

In his life, Li Xun Huan has heard thousands of insults directed at him. Yet this is the first time someone has accused him of being 'girly'. He really doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

The ponytailed girl looked at him with her big, shiny eyes. "If you have nothing to say, why don't you start coughing?"

Li Xun Huan sighed, "Young lady's eyes really are sharp, looks like you're a distinguished person. I'm sorry I didn't recognize you."

The ponytailed girl said, "Stop flattering me, I'm just a nobody."

Li Xun Huan really did start to cough.

The ponytailed girl said in a sweet voice, "I know you never

brag about yourself, but like to praise others. This is one of your best characteristic, but also one of your worst. A person can't be too humble, you know."

Li Xun Huan said, "Young lady..."

The ponytailed girl cut in, "My surname isn't 'Young', my given name isn't 'Lady', so why do you keep calling me 'young lady'?"

Li Xun Huan smiled. He suddenly felt that this girl is quite interesting.

The ponytailed girl added, "My surname is Sun, I'm called Sun Xiao Hong, not the 'Hong' in 'ShangGuan JinHong', but 'Hong' as in the color red."

Li Xun Huan said, "My name is Li..."

The ponytailed girl cut in, "I've already known your name for a long time. Now I want to duel with you!"

This shocked Li Xun Huan, who said, "What kind of duel?"

Sun Xiao Hong giggled, "Of course not kung fu. Even if I practice for another hundred years, I still can't beat you. I just want to have a drinking competition with you. When I hear that someone else is a better drinker than me, I get pissed."

Li Xun Huan smiled, "I know everyone who drinks share this problem, but never thought you'd be the same."

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Except if I compete with you right now, I'm getting too big an advantage."

Li Xun Huan asked, "Why?"

Sun Xiao Hong said seriously, "After that fight, your body is tired, so your alcohol tolerance becomes lower. A drinking duel is the same as a kung fu duel. You need the right time, right place, and the right attitude to perform well. Miss one of these factors and your skills diminish."

Li Xun Huan said, "Just from what you've said, I can see you're an expert drinker. To be able to duel with such an expert, I would get drunk with no regret."

Sun Xiao Hong's big, bright eyes shined brightly, showing happiness, showing awe, yet her face is still quite serious. "Well... Since I gain the advantage in terms of time, you should therefore pick the place."

Li Xun Huan couldn't help but laugh. "In that case, follow me."

Sun Xiao Hong said, "After you!"

The hours right before dusk are the worst business hours for a shop.

Hunchback Sun sat at the door, looking at the sun.

At this time, Li Xun Huan came with Sun Xiao Hong. Hunchback Sun couldn't believe how these two people can together.

It really is strange how these two became friends.

Li Xun Huan did not see Hunchback Sun's expression, but he finds the whole situation quite funny.

This little girl never stops talking. Once she opens her mouth, she'll chatter constantly, making it hard to converse with her.

Li Xun Huan finds two things most annoying in life.

The first one is to find out that no one else at the dining table drinks wine.

The second one is to find a woman who chatters constantly.

He finds the second thing ten times as annoying as the first.

The strange thing is, not only does he not have a headache right now, he actually feels quite refreshed.

When the opponent of a wine-drinking competition is a beautiful woman, it really is quite refreshing.

If a woman is smart, pretty, and can drink, even if she talks too much, a man can tolerate her... but otherwise, a woman should talk as little as possible.

On the way, Li Xun Huan heard her say many things. The old man is called White-haired Sun, the grandfather of Sun Xiao Hong. Her parents are already dead, and she had always lived with her grandfather. They're almost never apart.

He couldn't help but ask, "So why isn't your grandfather with you now?"

Sun Xiao Hong gave a simple answer, "He went out of town to send someone away."

Li Xun Huan wanted to keep ask, "Why did he have to send this person outside the town?"

“Who is he sending?”

“Why didn’t he take you along?”

But Li Xun Huan never likes to talk too much. Besides, it’s not like he has a chance to with Sun Xiao Hong around.

It’s almost as if she purposely doesn’t want Li Xun Huan to ask that second question, countering with questions of her own.

“How did you learn your legendary dagger?”

“I heard you have a friend named Ah Fei. His speed is comparable to yours. Do you know where he is?”

“You disappeared for two years. No one knew you were hiding in Hunchback Sun’s shop. Why did you hide there?”

“Now that people know where you are, where do you plan on going?”

“Who’s the Plum Flower Bandit?”

“He hasn’t appeared in two years. Did he get caught?”

“If he is caught, did you catch him?”

He did not answer any of these questions. Some because he doesn’t want to, others because he doesn’t know what to say.”

He knows that Lin Xian Er is the Plum Flower Bandit.

He knows that Ah Fei would not bring himself to kill Lin Xian

Er.

He knows that Ah Fei took Lin Xian Er away.

But to where?

Had Lin Xian Er since become a good person?

Is Lin Xian Er in love with Ah Fei?

When he thought about this, he can only sigh.

He doesn't know what to do in the future either.

Sun Xiao Hong constantly kept her eyes on him, her gaze filled not just with admiration, but also with understanding.

Li Xun Huan looked up and met her gaze.

His heart suddenly pounded.

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Can we start the duel now?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Fine."

Sun Xiao Hong rolled her eyes, "Good. Now let's talk about how we will compete."

Li Xun Huan asked, "There are many ways to compete in drinking wine?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Of course. You didn't know that?"

Li Xun Huan said, "I only know one method, and that is for everyone to drink as much as possible. Whoever throws up first loses."

Sun Xiao Hong chuckled, shook her head. "It looks like you still lack drinking knowledge."

Li Xun Huan said, "Really?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "When it comes to wine, you can duel using the brute-force method, or the scholarly method."

Li Xun Huan said, "So what's the brute-force method? What's the scholarly method?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "The method you just described is the brute-force method. You're just chugging it all down"

"Chugging it?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Of course. What else would you call it when people just throw it all down the throat?"

Li Xun Huan said, "What else are can we do? Should we pour it down our ears, then."

Sun Xiao Hong smiled, "If you really can drink with your ear, then I would admit defeat now. I certainly can't do it."

Li Xun Huan said, "It's too slow to drink with my ear, I'm not patient enough."

Sun Xiao Hong said, "I'm just a little girl, so how can I compete using the first method? However, there are many scholarly methods of competing too."

"Which methods?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "You can guess numbers, clap hands, but these are too common. How could people like us

compete like this?”

Li Xun Huan said, “In that case, what else is there?”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “There’s only one method left.”

Li Xun Huan couldn’t help but laugh. Sun Xiao Hong also laughed. “However, this one method is not only original, but also quite interesting. Even if there are thousands of other methods out there, we’d still pick this one.”

Li Xun Huan said, “There’s already wine on the table, and I just want to drink it. So feel free to pick any method you want.”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “Listen closely now, this method is actually quite simple.”

Li Xun Huan could only listen.

Sun Xiao Hong said, “I’ll ask you a question. If you can answer it, then you win, and I have to drink a cup.”

Li Xun Huan said, “What if I can’t answer it? Then do I lose?”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “Not really. Only when I answer my own question would you then lose.”

Li Xun Huan said, “Once I lose, I then get to ask you questions, right?”

Sun Xiao Hong shook her head, “Nope. The winner can keep on asking forever, until he loses.”

Li Xun Huan said, “If you keep asking private questions, then wouldn’t you keep on winning?”

Sun Xiao Hong smiled, "Of course I can't ask private questions. If I ask you who's my mother, how many brothers I have, what's my age... then you obviously can't answer."

Li Xun Huan said, "Then would kind of questions are you going to ask?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Once we start, you'll find out."

Li Xun Huan chuckled. "I'm getting ready to lose."

Sun Xiao Hong said with a smile, "Ready? Here's the first question."

Her smile disappeared, her eyes staring at Li Xun Huan, and then asked, "Do you know who wrote that letter?"

This really is a shocking question!

Li Xun Huan's eyes lightened up, he stuttered, "I don't know... Do you?"

Sun Xiao Hong said calmly, "If I didn't know, then why would I ask you this question? That person is..."

Sun Xiao Hong purposely paused a moment, then said calmly, "...is Lin Xian Er!"

Her answer is even more shocking! Li Xun Huan has always been a calm person, but he couldn't help but shake just then. "How do you know it's her?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "It's not your turn yet to ask questions. So drink your wine first before we move on."

Li Xun Huan quickly finished the whole cup.

Sun Xiao Hong asked, "Do you know Ah Fei's condition?"

Li Xun Huan answered, "No."

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Although he's living with Lin Xian Er, he doesn't actually know what Lin Xian Er does."

Li Xun Huan immediately asked, "Where is he now?"

Sun Xiao Hong shook her head and sighed. "Why are you so impatient? Wait till you've won before asking."

Li Xun Huan can only drink another cup. This cup is actually bigger than most bowls, yet he still finished the cup faster than usual. Because he really wants to hear the third question."

Sun Xiao Hong asked, "Do you know why Lin Xian Er wrote that letter?"

Li Xun Huan answered, "No."

Although he has guessed at her intentions, he's still not certain."

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Because she knows that if people want to hurt Lin Shi Yin, you'd appear. She wants to make you appear, then find people to kill you. You are her biggest enemy in this world. She's terrified of you. As long as you're alive, she can't reappear."

Li Xun Huan sighed, drank the third cup.

Sun Xiao Hong asked, "Do you know who's the first person to

want you dead?”

Li Xun Huan answered, “I’ve killed way too many people in my life. So how could I know?”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “But only two or three people in this world can kill you. The first one is ShangGuan JinHong!”

Li Xun Huan didn’t find this answer surprising. He drank the fourth cup, then couldn’t restrain himself from asking, “Is he here now?”

Chapter 34: Shocking News

Sun Xiao Hong shook her head and smiled. “Look at you. Why do you keep making this mistake? Wait until it’s your turn.”

She then added, “You should know about ShangGuan JinHong’s temper. Normal treasures certainly won’t get his attention. What do you think he’s after?”

Li Xun Huan said, “I don’t know.”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “Because he heard that your father was once a close friend of the former top fighter in the martial world, Shen Lang*.”

*Note: Shen Lang is the main character of another Gu Long novel, Wu Lin Wai Shi(Mission of Warriors). Those of you who have seen the adaptation of the same name should know about him.

Li Xun Huan said, “Shen Lang is indeed a great friend of father’s, but he has long retired and has since lived on a remote island. So what does he have to do with all this?”

Sun Xiao Hong smiled, “Looks like if I don’t let you ask a question, you’d go crazy. But first you must drink three cups.”

It's as if she purposely wants to get Li Xun Huan drunk. Only her questions are too shocking, her answers even more shocking. Even though Li Xun Huan knows her purpose, he still kept drinking.

Only then did Sun Xiao Hong continue, "Because he heard that before Shen Lang retired, he gave your father two martial art manuals. After only learning from one of the manuals, your Little Li's Flying Dagger is already peerless in the martial world. If someone learns both, one can only imagine the results. So even ShangGuan JinHong can't help himself."

Li Xun Huan paused a moment before responding, "If this is really true, then how could I not know?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "I realize that this is just a rumor started by Lin Xian Er. Shen Lang is extremely intelligent, so why would he purposely leave the manuals for people to fight over?"

She smiled. "Even if he did leave some manuals, he won't do so at your house. Why would he want to bring such trouble to a friend?"

Li Xun Huan sighed, "That's right."

Sun Xiao Hong blinked her eyes, and then asked, "I really should let you ask me another question. So you're definitely capable of answering my next question."

Her eyes gazed innocently at Li Xun Huan, "Is she still the only person in your heart? Are you still willing to die for her? Of course, I'm sure you know which 'she' I'm talking about."

Li Xun Huan paused a moment.

He never thought Sun Xiao Hong would ask this question.

No matter who asks this question, he would never answer. This is his most painful secret, and his most secretive pain.

If someone asks this question, it would be like stabbing him with a knife.

He really can't figure out why Sun Xiao Hong would ask this question.

Young girls tend to be very curious, could that be the reason?

She obviously doesn't want to hurt Li Xun Huan, or she wouldn't have divulged all those secrets to him.

But who is she?

How can she know so much?

Her grandfather is obviously a very powerful person, White-haired Sun must not be his real name. So who is he?"

Who did he meet outside? Is that person ShangGuan JinHong?"

Where are Ah Fei and Lin Xian Er hiding?

These really are secrets that Li Xun Huan would do anything to find out!

Li Xun Huan sat there for a long time, then finally took a deep breath. "When there's seemingly no love there really is love. When love becomes deep love turns shallow... Cruel?"

Or sentimental? Who can judge? Who can..."

His spoke softer and softer, until no one can hear it.

Sun Xiao Hong sighed, then said sweetly, "Why do you do this to yourself? ... Why?"

She also became quieter and quieter, until she can't even hear her own voice.

After a long time, Sun Xiao Hong suddenly picked up the cup and drank the wine. She said with a smile, "Ok, I lost this time. Time for you to ask me again."

Li Xun Huan asked seriously, "Where is Ah Fei right now?"

Sun Xiao Hong smiled, "I knew you were going to ask this question. Other than her, he's probably the person you care the most."

Li Xun Huan said, "Of course, anyone who have a friend like him would care deeply for his well-being."

Sun Xiao Hong said, "If someone can have a friend like you, wouldn't they also care deeply for your well-being?"

She then smiled strangely, and took out a letter. "This is where Ah Fei lives right now. Just follow the map, and you'll find him."

Li Xun Huan said, "Thank you."

This is the second time he said 'thank you' today.

Sun Xiao Hong stared at him. "You didn't thank me when I told you the most important secret to you. You didn't thank

me when I told you who wants to kill you. So why do you thank me now?"

Li Xun Huan did not respond.

Sun Xiao Hong said, "I know the answer even if you don't tell me. The reason is that only with this map can you find Ah Fei. Only then can you save him, telling him not to love someone who doesn't deserve it, and therefore destroying himself. You thanked me for him."

She continued, "This is the same reason why you thanked Guo Song Yang for Lin Shi Yin... Have you ever thanked someone for yourself?"

Li Xun Huan still did not respond.

Sun Xiao sighed, "My grandpa told me, if someone doesn't live for himself, then he really leads a sad life."

Sun Xiao Hong also stopped talking, her expression also gloomy. Only after a long time did a faint smile appear on the side of her lips.

"Yet if someone only lives for himself, his life can get boring really quickly."

Li Xun Huan drank another cup, then asked, "Who's your grandpa sending away?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "ShangGuan JinHong!"

This answer really shocked Li Xun Huan.

He couldn't help but ask again, "ShangGuan JinHong hasn't even entered the town yet, why would he leave?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Since my grandpa personally went to send him away, how could he not oblige?"

Li Xun Huan said, "Are you saying that your grandpa is..."

When he got here, he started to cough again.

As he bent down, he felt dizzy.

Hunchback Sun originally stood far away, but couldn't help but come over now, telling Li Xun Huan, "You drank too much today, and too fast. Why don't you save the questions for tomorrow."

Li Xun Huan asked, "Do you know who ShangGuan JinHong is?"

Hunchback Sun said, "I don't. I'm also not going to drink this cup of wine either."

Li Xun Huan laughed loudly. "Of course you don't. You're not in this duel, so you obviously don't need to follow the rules."

Hunchback Sun looked at him strangely, as if he has never seen this person before.

Li Xun Huan continued, "But I can tell you the answer. ShangGuan JinHong considers himself to be the best fighter in the martial world. He is incredibly arrogant, and doesn't give a damn about anyone. Yet this time, he actually listened to Old Man Sun. Do you know why?"

Hunchback Sun said, "No."

Li Xun Huan said, "I don't either. That's why I must ask,

because I need to know.”

Hunchback Sun said, “You ask too much. That’s why you’re drunk.”

Li Xun Huan held up his cup and asked Sun Xiao Hong, “Ms. Sun, who is Old Man Sun?”

Sun Xiao Hong responded with a smile, “Old Man Sun is my father’s father, my own grandfather.”

Li Xun Han laughed loudly, “Correct. Correct. You’re absolutely right.”

He drank the entire cup.

After he finished, his vision became blurry. He said, “I have another question.”

Yet Sun Xiao Hong’s eyes became extremely bright. She chuckled, “Go ahead. Better ask before you get drunk.”

Li Xun Huan said, “I ask you. Why do you want to get me drunk? Why...”

Sun Xiao Hong filled up his cup with wine, then answered with a big smile, “Because we’re having a wine-drinking competition. Isn’t the point of the competition to get the other person drunk first? Every wine drinker loves nothing better than to see everyone else drunk first, am I right?”

Li Xun Huan said, “That’s right, right, right...”

He finished this cup, then crashed onto the table.

This time, he really is drunk.

Neither Hunchback Sun nor Sun Xiao Hong spoke. Both stared at Li Xun Huan, wondering whether he's really drunk, or just pretending.

Night came.

Hunchback Sun lit up the candle, then said, "It's time for dinner. There might be some customers."

While speaking, he went quickly to the door and locked it, as if trying to lock Sun Xiao Hong inside.

Sun Xiao Hong did not protest.

The lock* is quite heavy. Normally it takes a long time for Hunchback to put it on the door. Yet today, he seemingly became much stronger, lifting the lock like a feather.

*Note: If you've seen any ancient serials, you know that in ancient times, the lock is just a long stick to hold the door together, and not the type of lock used in modern time.

Sun Xiao Hong suddenly smiled, "Everyone else said second uncle you're amazingly strong, it's so unfortunate that it took me this long to see."

Hunchback Sun turned around. He raised his eyebrows, asking, "Who's your second uncle? Are you drunk too?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Your acting is really good, you know. But do you keep acting even now?"

Hunchback Sun stared at her, his eyes cold as ice.

How could these be the eyes of Hunchback Sun?

If Li Xun Huan saw this pair of eyes, he would be very proud, because he has never seen it in their two years together.

Too bad Li Xun Huan cannot see anything now.

Sun Xiao Hong said, "I know he's really drunk today, rather than just pretending."

Hunchback Sun said, "Do you know how high his alcohol tolerance is? How can he become drunk so quickly?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "But you see, when someone is in a bad mood, and is exhausted, no matter how good he is at drinking, he'd still get drunk easily."

Hunchback Sun asked, "Why did you try to get him drunk?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "You don't know? This is what grandpa wanted."

"Really?"

"Now that everyone knows where he is, many will come looking for him soon. That's why grandpa wants to hide him for a while."

She let out a sigh, "But you also know his temper. How can we take him away if he's not drunk?"

Hunchback Sun said, "To be honest, I have no clue how your grandpa thinks."

Sun Xiao Hong asked, "What don't you understand?"

Hunchback Sun said, "When Li Xun Huan wants to simply stay low, your grandpa keeps wanting him to reappear. Yet

now that he has reappeared, your grandpa wants to hide him.”

Sun Xiao Hong shook her head, “This is where you’re wrong. He’s only going to temporarily hide.”

She looked at the unconscious Li Xun Huan and smiled. “Do you know how many people want this head?”

Hunchback Sun laughed coldly, “Who cares? Other than ShangGuan JinHong, why would he be afraid of anyone else?”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “But you’re wrong again. Obviously anyone how wants to take this head knows what they’re doing.”

Hunchback Sun asked, “Is that so. Can you name them for me?”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “Forget the guys, and start with the ladies first. We have the Cheerful Lady Buddha and the Blue Scorpion...”

As she said these names, Hunchback Sun raised his eyebrows.

Sun Xiao Hong continued, “Bai Xiao Sheng is extremely biased towards men, so his Book of Weapons did not list any ladies, but I’m still sure you’ve heard about these two witches, right?”

Hunchback Sun nodded.

Sun Xiao Hong said, “The Blue Scorpion is the Green Devil Hand’s girlfriend, the Cheerful Lady Buddha is Five-Poison

Kid's step-mother. They have been seeking Li Xun Huan for a long time. They'll surely come once they find out that he's here."

She sighed, "Even if one of them comes, Li Xun Huan will have his hands full."

Hunchback Sun picked up a towel and started to clean the tables.

Whenever he's in a bad mood, he does this.

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Now lets list the gentlemen."

She closed her eyes, held up her fingers and said, "The guys include ShangGuan JinHong, Lu Feng Xian, Jing Wu Ming*, and... I bet you can't figure out the last one."

*Note: 'Wu Ming' means 'No Life'.

Hunchback Sun simply kept cleaning the tables, not even bother to look up. He asked, "Who?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Hu Bu Gui."

Hunchback Sun stopped and raised his head in shock, and asked, "Hu Bu Gui? You mean Crazy Hu?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "That's right. This person always seems crazy. He uses a bamboo sword. I heard that his sword art is just as crazy as his person. Sometimes it would look incredible, while other times look like crap, unwatchable. That's why Bai Xiao Sheng never listed him in his Book of Weapons."

Hunchback Sun said, "The crap part is fake. The incredible

part is real.”

After thinking for a while, he said, “But this person always keeps to himself. Why would he bother Li Xun Huan?”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “I heard Long Xiao Yun asked him to. Crazy Hu owe Long Xiao Yun’s teacher a favor.”

Hunchback Sun said, “It’s hard to find someone like him. Quite amazing that Long Xiao Yun can find him.”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “That’s why Long Xiao Yun spent two years away from his home.”

Hunchback Sun said, “Is the Lu Feng Xian you mentioned the same one listed number five on the Book of Weapons?”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “That’s right. He has learnt a special kung fu recently, and wants to fight all the fighters ranked above him.”

Hunchback Sun said, “What about that Jing... Jing...”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “Jing Wu Ming?”

She continued, “Jin Wu Ming is best fighter under ShangGuan JinHong!”

Hunchback Sun asked, “Then how come I haven’t heard of his name?”

Sun Xiao Hong said, “He’s only been around for two years. Grandpa said that among the young fighters today, he and Ah Fei are by far the best.”

Hunchback Sun asked, “Really?”

Sun Xiao Hong said, "He also uses the sword, and like Ah Fei, his sword is also extremely fast, accurate and deadly! In addition, he has another deadly quality."

Hunchback Sun kept on listening, listening very closely.

Sun Xiao Hong continued, "He rarely fights, but when he does, he acts as if he doesn't care for his own life, every attack as if his last. Since he's called 'No Life', he obviously doesn't think much of his own life."

Hunchback Sun stayed silent for a long time before asking, "Where's your grandpa?"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "We agreed to meet outside the town..."

She smiled slyly, "He knows that I can find a way to get Li Xun Huan there."

Hunchback Sun smiled, shaking his head. "You really are a devious little girl."

Sun Xiao Hong curled up her lips, "I'm almost twenty. Why do you still call me a little girl?"

Chapter 35: The Man-Eating Scorpion

Hunchback Sun sighed and said, "You have indeed grown up. You were only five the last time I saw you..."

He then went back to cleaning the tables.

Sun Xiao Hong lowered her head, said, "Second uncle, you haven't been home for what, thirteen, fourteen years now?"

Hunchback Sun nodded and answered, "Yes. Fourteen years, just a few more days and it will be fourteen years."

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Why don't you go back and visit sometime?"

Hunchback Sun slapped the table loudly, and answered in a booming voice, "I promised someone that I would protect a family for fifteen years, so you better believe I will!"

Sun Xiao Hong said, "Oh, I see now."

After a long time, Hunchback Sun returned to cleaning the tables again.

Once he started to clean the tables, those menacing, sparkling eyes disappear.

This is what happens when a person cleans tables for fourteen years.

Hunchback Sun asked, "How are the others doing?"

Sun XiaoHong smiled, "They're all great. Eldest aunt-in-law and third aunt-in-law both had kids this year. Fourth aunt even had twins. So this year's New Year will be extra sweet." Out of the corner of her eyes, Sun XiaoHong saw Hunchback Sun's sad eyes, and immediately stopped. Instead she added, "Everyone's hoping that you can make it back this year."

Hunchback Sun forced a smile and said, "Tell them I'll be there next New Year."

Sun XiaoHong clapped her hands. She said, "That's great. I remember that you make the best fireworks."

Hunchback Sun said, "I'll certainly make them for you next year. For now, you just need to leave quickly, or your grandpa will worry."

He then looked at Li XunHuan, and asked, "How are you going to take him away?"

Sun XiaoHong said, "I'll just carry him."

Just as she stood up, a person suddenly yells in a chilling manner, "You can leave, but this drunkard stays!"

This is undoubtedly a woman's voice.

Hunchback Sun and Sun XiaoHong had been watching the front door, while this voice came from the back room. Neither knew when she came into the house.

Hunchback Sun's face sunk, with a flip of his hand threw out the towel.

He's been wiping the tables for fourteen years. If each day he wipes them twenty times, then it would be seven thousand and three hundred times a year, or one hundred and two thousand two hundred times in fourteen years. Anyone who wipes tables this much would have very good strength.

Besides, Hunchback Sun's Eagle Claws is already famous in the martial world, so when he threw this towel, its force is no less than any hidden weapon in the world.

Only to hear a 'Ping' sound, with dusts flying everywhere. The towel made a big hole in the back wall, yet the person standing in front of the door was unscathed.

It's as if her body never moved, although the towel should have made a big hole in her stomach.

Yet for some reason, it missed her.

Maybe it's because her waist is very thin, so she can easily dodge.

What makes this woman attractive is not just her waist.

Her legs are long and straight, any part that should be fat is not thin, while any part that should be thin is not fat.

Her eyes are long and charming, but her mouth is very big, her lips very thick.

Although her skin is very white, it's also very coarse, and

covered with much body hair.

She can't be considered a beautiful woman, but she does have quite a bit of magnetism in her look.

Hunchback Sun turned around and stared at her.

She also stared at Hunchback Sun. From her expression, Hunchback Sun seemed like the most handsome, charming man alive, as if he's her lover.

But when her eyes turned towards Sun XiaoHong, they instantly became icy.

She hates all women very much.

Hunchback Sun coughed twice before asking, "Blue Scorpion?"

Blue Scorpion laughed.

When she laughs, her eyes become even thinner, longer, as if a long thread.

She said with a smile, "You really are a knowledgeable person. I like knowledgeable people."

Hunchback Sun kept a surly face, and did not respond.

He doesn't like to go against a woman, because he doesn't know how to go against a woman.

Blue Scorpion said, "I'm quite knowledgeable too. I also know who you are."

Hunchback Sun said in a thunderous voice, "If you know,

then why are you still here?"

Blue Scorpion sighed lightly, said, "I don't really want to face you two, but I must take this drunkard with me."

She sighed again, and then said in a gentle manner, "Maybe you don't know, but it's incredibly difficult to find a man that can satisfy me. But now that I have found one, this drunkard killed him."

Sun XiaoHong couldn't help cutting in, "But he did not kill Yi Ku."

Blue Scorpion said, "It doesn't matter. I'm going to assume that he was the killer."

Sung XiaoHong said, "No matter how you like to assume, you still can't take him away."

Blue Scorpion sighed, and then said, "I know you won't let me take him away easily, but I also don't want to fight you. So how should we settle this?"

She suddenly waved her hand towards her back, and said lightly, "Come here."

Hunchback Sun saw another shadow appear from the back.

This person is very bulky. When Blue Scorpion waved her hand, he walked in.

Only to see his clothing very neat, his bright mustache very nicely trimmed. On his waist is a gorgeous nine-ringed saber.

Blue Scorpion said, "Do you know who he is?"

Hunchback Sun did not respond, but Sun XiaoHong said, “I recognize him.”

Blue Scorpion asked, “You really know who he is?”

Sun XiaoHong said, “His name is Chu XianYu. His nickname is Live Overlord.

Blue Scorpion looked at this Live Overlord and said, “Looks like you’re pretty famous. Even a little girl knows you.”

A smug expression appeared on Live Overlord’s face.

Sun XiaoHong said, “I know just about all the famous people in the martial world, but I just can’t figure out what’s he doing with you.”

Blue Scorpion said with a smile, “He seduced me on the way here.”

Sun XiaoHong smiled, and then said, “Was he the one who seduced you? Or the other way around?”

Blue Scorpion said, “Of course it’s he who seduced me. Although you know that he’s famous, and that his kung fu is very good, but you don’t realize that his ability to seduce woman is also amazing.”

Hunchback Sun is already getting restless. So he asked, “Why did you bring him here?”

Blue Scorpion said, “Chu XiangYu really is quite a skillful fighter. When he uses his ‘Eighty-one Hand Continuous Ringed-Saber’, most people can’t even get close to him.”

Hunchback Sun said, "Humph."

Blue Scorpion said, "But if I were to say that I can kill him in one move, would you believe me?"

Chu XianYu, who had stood proudly all this time, said in shock, "What did you say?"

Blue Scorpion said in a comforting voice, "Nothing important. Just that I want to take your life."

Chu XiangYu's face turned pale. After hesitating for a moment, he said, "You're kidding."

Blue Scorpion sighed again, and then said, "Just because we spent a night together, you don't believe that I would kill you, right?"

Chu XiangYu said, "How could I not know? Where I live, there are many scorpions."

Blue Scorpion asked, "Then do you know that female scorpions have a peculiar habit?"

Chu XiangYu said while forcing a smile, "But you're not a scorpion."

Blue Scorpion said, "Who said I'm not a scorpion? I'm obviously one. You didn't know that?"

Chu XiangYu immediately jumped back, with a loud 'Ping' sound, knocked over the table behind him. His balancing ability is quite good, allowing him to keep his footing.

He pulled out his Nine-ringed Saber.

He's very experienced in the martial world, so he knows who

Blue Scorpion is. However, he couldn't believe that a woman so easily seduced could possibly be the famous Blue Scorpion.

Blue Scorpion said in a comforting voice, "Here's some advice. The next time you try to seduce a woman, first check out her background. Unfortunately..."

She sighed again, and as she walked towards Chu XiangYu, said, "Unfortunately there is no next time."

Chu XiangYu yelled, "Halt! If you take another step forward, I'll kill you."

Blue Scorpion said, "Fine. Then kill me. I'm really looking forward to dying in your hands."

Chu XiangYu let out a loud scream, the Nine-ringed Saber swept forward.

The saber's wind roared like a tiger, its sweep carried an immense energy.

But this was his only move.

Only to see a blue sparkle, a dense jade freezing light, flash across. Chu XiangYu fell down. Even his last scream was cut off in the middle.

There were no wounds on his body, only two small hole on his neck filled with blood, as if he were just bitten by a scorpion.

Hunchback Sun and Sun XiaoHong simply sat there watching the event unfold. Neither bothered to interfere, probably because they don't really want to interfere. Anyone

who would seduce just any woman on the road can't possibly a good person.

Blue Scorpion kept on looking at Chu XiangYu's body.

She stared at it for a long time, as if admiring her own work.

Then, she laughed.

As she laughed she said, "I told you I only needed one move. You believe me now, right?"

Neither Hunchback Sun nor Sun XiaoHong spoke.

Blue Scorpion continued, "My kung fu is pretty decent, right?"

Again, no response.

Blue Scorpion added, "Yi Ku's Green Devil Hand is ranked ninth on the Book of Weapons. But should Bai XiaoSheng included me on the list, he'd fall back to at least number ten."

This is true, for she attacks even faster, deadlier, than Yi Ku!

Blue Scorpion looked at Hunchback Sun, and then said, "My kung fu should certainly be enough to take this drunkard with me, right?"

Hunchback Sun answered coldly, "NO!"

Blue Scorpion sighed before asking, "Then what does it take to leave with this drunk? You want me to sleep with you?"

Hunchback Sun roared loudly, both of his hands shot out.

His right hand attacked in the shape of a claw, while his left hand in a fist. Left fist filled with thunderous power. The claw appears as hooks, filled with thousands of variations. Although barehanded, his power is more than ten times as powerful as Chu XiangYu's saber.

Blue Scorpion twisted her waist, and suddenly disappeared.

While Hunchback Sun attacked, she quickly got behind him.

Thankfully, Hunchback Sun is a first-rate fighter. He quickly pulled back his hands, reabsorbing the power of his fist and claws.

One of the hardest things to do while fighting is to retract one's attack. Due to the speed and power of each attack, it's difficult to stop in the middle.

Yet Hunchback Sun did this without any problem.

Had it been anyone else, he would be forced to back up a few steps, right into Blue Scorpion's hands.

But thankfully, Hunchback Sun is a hunchback. So when he pulled back his power, it simply all went back to his hump.

He shrunk his shoulder, and began to rush backwards towards Blue Scorpion with his hump.

This is one of his more famous moves. He has practiced enough so that his hump is hard as steel. This rush carried incredible amount of strength.

Blue Scorpion obviously knows this move. She twisted her waist; her long robe danced in the air, and quickly flew back

to the front of Hunchback Sun. Then she said, “Not only are you knowledgeable, but your kung fu is also amazing. If you just say the word, I’ll follow you everywhere.”

Hunchback Sun yelled, “Why don’t you go to hell.”

Blue Scorpion smiled innocently and said, “Even if I die, I’ll have to die on the bed!”

In front of a woman like her, after seeing her smile, one would have a hard time using all his force.

But while her opponents might not fight with full force, she does not do the same. That’s why in the past ten years, so many men died in her hands.

Unfortunately, her opponent today is Hunchback Sun. Hunchback Sun has absolutely no interest in woman.

With another roar, Hunchback Sun’s iron claws shot out again.

Blue Scorpion twirled her sleeves, backed up a few steps, and then said, “Wait a moment.”

Hunchback Sun pulled back his attack and asked, “What are you waiting for?”

Blue Scorpion said, “Since we’re going to fight. You should at least see my weapon first.”

Before she finished her sentence, a thin, blue shred of cold light came out of her sleeve, streaking toward Hunchback Sun.

Hunchback Sun raised his hand, attempting to grab the blue

light.

He always liked to finish his fights quickly. So even though he realized the power of Blue Scorpion's weapon, he still tried to grab it. Hunchback Sun felt confident that his forty years of Eagle Claw training could overpower her weapon. Then he can defeat her in one blow!

But, he might be too confident.

Sun XiaoHong stood there silently; her eyes never left Blue Scorpion's sleeves.

Her eyes are very sharp.

When that streak of blue light came out, she realized what it was.

She has never seen such a strange weapon before.

It looks like an immense scorpion tail, long, curved, seemingly soft but quite hard, yet easy to twist.

Obviously, Sun XiaoHong's very confident in her uncle's Eagle Claws. But she knew that should his hands touch this weapon, he would be eaten by this man-eating scorpion.

But due to the speed of Blue Scorpion's attack, Sun XiaoHong realized that she couldn't possibly interfere in time. She just couldn't believe that her uncle would be so rash in trying to take on the weapon directly.

But she didn't realize that after fourteen years of wiping tables, Hunchback Sun had long been itching to get into a fight. So now that he has a chance, Hunchback Sun obviously could not hold back. He wanted a swift victory.

She cried out.

But this hand moved faster than her voice. Just as she yelled, this hand had already grabbed Blue Scorpion's hand.

After hearing a tinkering sound, the blue light dropped to the ground.

As the blue light dropped to the ground, Blue Scorpion backed off a few steps. She retreated way too fast and lost her balance, hitting the wall behind her awkwardly.

Then the room became silent, as if it's a graveyard.

Everyone just stood there.

Everyone looked at this hand. Blue Scorpion's eyes were not only filled with incredible shock, but also of extreme pain!

Her wrist broke!

She pulled back her hand slowly.

At this time, a person stood up leisurely. He's none other than the already drunk Li XunHuan!

Happy and astonished, Sun XiaoHong said, "So you weren't drunk after all."

Li XunHuan chuckled and said, "I know that I'm feeling down, and that my body's incredibly tired. But I've always had an incredible capacity for wine."

Sun XiaoHong stared at him. Many emotions intertwined within her. Even she doesn't know what they are. Perhaps

shock? Or happiness? Or admiration? Or maybe it's regret.

She could not make Li XunHuan drunk after all.

Blue Scorpion only looked at Li XunHuan with terror in her eyes.

Because a dagger appeared in Li XunHuan's hand.

Little Li's Flying Dagger!

The dagger is the most fearsome when it's still in Li XunHuan's hand. Because after it leaves his hand, his enemy would no longer be scared.

A dead person would not fear anything.

The only sounds left in the room are everyone's breaths.

Chapter 36: Strange Emotions

Sweat poured off of Blue Scorpion head.

She continuously shivered while she yelled, "Why haven't you released your dagger yet? Why don't you just kill me?"

Li XunHuan said, "Since you're willing to seek revenge for Yi Ku, it's obvious that you really love him. Now that he's dead, you must be in a great deal of pain..."

He looked at the dagger in his hand, then said gently, "I understand this pain you feel. I truly understand... I just want you to know that this pain will not lessen as you kill people. No matter how many people you kill, the pain will still be with you."

With a flash, the dagger shot out.

It landed on the wall by the side of the Blue Scorpion.

Li XunHuan said, "You can go now."

Blue Scorpion froze.

After a long time, she finally asked, "In that case, how can I lessen this pain?"

Li XunHuan sighed, and then said, "I don't know the answer. Perhaps... perhaps if you can find someone to replace him, it will help. I really hope you can find that person."

Blue Scorpion stared at him. Tears came down her eyes.

Sun XiaoHong also stared at Li XunHuan.

She had never met a man like him. She never imagined that there could be someone like him. She gazed at his body, trying to see through his heart.

Blue Scorpion left. She left with tears.

Li XunHuan pondered for a while before smiling. He said, "You must be wondering why I didn't kill her."

Sun XiaoHong did not respond.

Hunchback Sun kept staring at that strange weapon on the ground. He also remained silent.

Li XunHuan said, "I feel that if someone can shed tears, then that person should not die."

Sun XiaoHong suddenly smiled. She said, "I know you don't like to kill people. So I was hardly surprised to see you let her go. What I want to know is, since you weren't drunk, why did you pretend to be?"

Li XunHuan said, "You're also a drinking expert. So you must know that pretending to be drunk is much better than really being drunk. If I were really drunk, not only would it be not fun, the hangover next morning would also be awful."

Sun XiaoHong said, "That makes a lot of sense."

Li XunHuan said, "But anyone who drinks is bound to get drunk. So if you want to see me drunk, there will be many more chances in the future."

Sun XiaoHong sighed, and then said, "But I know that because I missed this chance, I'll never be able to get you drunk again."

Li XunHuan said, "Actually, I..."

Before he finished talking, he saw Hunchback Sun walked to the back of the counter, and began to pour a large jar of wine down his throat.

He chugged down nearly the whole jar before Sun XiaoHong could take it from his hand. She stumped her foot and said, "He'd rather pretend to be drunk so he won't get drunk. Why are you purposely trying to get yourself drunk?"

Hunchback Sun stuttered, "Being drunk will solve a thousand worries. It really is better... better to be drunk."

Sun XiaoHong asked, "Why?"

Hunchback Sun yelled, "You want to know why? I'll tell you. Because I don't want to owe someone a favor. I'd rather have someone stab me than helping me out."

He then slumped back to the chair, and said with his hands on his face, "Li XunHuan, oh Li XunHuan. Why did you save me? Do you realize that my life had been saved once already? Do you know why I have been living here all these years?"

Li XunHuan wanted to ask him, "Who saved you?"

“Why did you agree to guard here for fifteen years?”

“What are you guarding?”

But Hunchback Sun’s voice became softer and softer. Is he drunk? Or is he simply asleep.

Li XunHuan looked at Sun XiaoHong. He wanted to ask her these same questions. But once he saw those lively big, bright, dark eyes, he instantly gave up on the idea.

He knew that it’s impossible to get any information from a girl like her.

Li XunHuan could only take a deep breath, and then said, “Your uncle really is a true gentleman.”

Sun XiaoHong looked at him through the corner of her eyes, and said with a smile, “You mean only a true gentleman would get drunk this fast?”

Li XunHuan said, “What I mean is, only a true gentleman would keep his words no matter what. Only a true gentleman would never want to accept a favor, to sacrifice himself for the sake of others.”

Sun XiaoHong rolled her eyes. She said, “So that’s why you also have to stay here to protect someone, right?”

Li XunHuan did not respond.

Sun XiaoHong said, “No matter what, you won’t leave, right?”

Li XunHuan still did not respond.

Sun XiaoHong said, "Do you still care for Ah Fei? Do you want to see him? Isn't he your friend?"

Li XunHuan remained silent for a long time, before responding, "At least he can take care of himself."

Sun XiaoHong said, "I have often heard that while Lin XianEr looks like an angel, her specialty is to take men down to hell."

She then said slowly, "Are you certain she won't take your friend down to hell?"

Li XunHuan shut his mouth again.

Sun XiaoHong sighed. She then said, "I also realize that you won't leave. For her, you can forget everything else. Everything!"

Her eyes then became filled with so much tender and gentleness, looking at Li XunHuan. Sun XiaoHong said, "But why can't you find someone to replace her?"

Li XunHuan's body shook, and began to cough again.

Sun XiaoHong said, "I won't force you to leave if you don't want to. But you should at least go see my grandpa."

Li XunHuan asked in between his coughs, "Where... where is he?"

Sun XiaoHong said, "He's at the long pavilion outside the town."

Li XunHuan asked, "Why there?"

Sun XiaoHong said, "Because ShangGuan JinHong will pass there."

Li XunHuan said, "But even if ShangGuan JinHong is bound to pass there, your grandpa might not get to see him."

Sun XiaoHong said, "Ah, but he will, because ShangGuan JinHong never rides in a carriage or on a horse. He often says that humans have legs so they can walk."

Li XunHuan chuckled, said, "You sure know a lot."

Sun XiaoHong returned a smile, and then said, "I sure do."

Li XunHuan said, "Not only do you know that ShangGuan JinHong will come here, you even know which route he's going to take. Not only do you know that Lin XianEr wrote that letter, you even know where she's hiding..."

He looked intently into her eyes, and asked, "Why do you know all these things?"

Sun XiaoHong bit her lips, and responded with a smile, "I have my way. But I just won't tell you!"

The night is dark.

Sun XiaoHong's steps are light and quick, as if she's never tired. She seemed to be interested in just about everything.

She really is fully of life.

She's still very young.

Li XunHuan felt like a totally opposite person standing besides her.

He admire her, maybe even a bit jealous of her. When he realized this, he felt shocked.

“Am I really that old?”

He knows that only an old person would be jealous of youth.

He said with a smile, “If I were ten years younger, I would certainly not walk so close to you.”

Sun XiaoHong asked, “Why?”

Li XunHuan said, “Everyone says that I’m a playboy. If I were next to a girl like you, others might get the wrong idea.”

He chuckled before continuing, “Thankfully, I’m already an old man. So if someone sees us together, they would think that we’re father and daughter.”

Sun XiaoHong said loudly, “My father? You really think you’re that old?”

Li XunHuan said, “Of course.”

Sun XiaoHong suddenly began to laugh out loud.

Li XunHuan asked, “Why are you laughing?”

Sun XiaoHong said, “I’m laughing at you!”

Li XunHuan asked, “Why?”

Sun XiaoHong said, “Because I know you’re afraid of me.”

Li XunHuan said, "What? Afraid of you?"

Sun XiaoHong's eyes shined as bright as the stars in the sky.

She laughed innocently and said, "You only said those words because you're afraid of me. You're afraid that you might... to me... That's why you tell me that you're an old man."

Li XunHuan could only laugh bitterly.

Sun XiaoHong said, "Actually, if you're really an old man, then I'd be an old woman."

She suddenly stopped walking, and said to Li XunHuan in a gentle tone, "Only when a man thinks that he's old does he actually become old. My grandpa never admitted to being old. And you're not old either. So please don't ever such a thing again, ok?"

As Li XunHuan looked at this pair of eyes, he suddenly remembered Lin ShiYin of ten years ago.

She was also just as youthful and energetic at that time.

What about now?

Li XunHuan sighed, and shied away from her gaze. Looking at the distant darkness, he said, "The long pavilion is in the front. Let's hurry."

In the darkness of the night, a single candlelight lit up in the entire pavilion. One can vaguely make out a person's shadow by the candle.

Sun XiaoHong asked, "Did you see the candle?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

Sun XiaoHong said with a smile, "Do you know what that is? If you do, I'd be in awe of you if you know."

Li XunHuan said, "That's your grandpa smoking a pipe."

Sun XiaoHong said, "Wow! You must be a genius."

Li XunHuan couldn't help but chuckle. For some reason, he tends to smile a lot more in front of this girl, while coughing much less.

Sun XiaoHong said, "I wonder if ShangGuan JinHong is here yet. Or if grandpa had already sent him away."

She got a bit worried, and added, "Let's hurry up, so we can see..."

Before she finished, Li XunHuan suddenly grabbed her hand.

Sun XiaoHong's heart started to beat faster, her face suddenly became red.

She stole a peek at Li XunHuan's face, only to see his face in a deeply serious manner. His eyes gazed into the distance.

Two specks of lights appeared in the distance.

Those are lantern lights.

The lanterns are golden colored, held up by a long, thin bamboo stick.

The lanterns look very secretive, and very scary.

In a flash, Li XunHuan carried Sun XiaoHong with him to hide behind a nearby tree.

Sun XiaoHong whispered, “Golden Money Clan?”

Li XunHuan nodded.

Sun XiaoHong said, “Looks like ShangGuan JinHong just got here. Could it be that they had some problems on the road?”

Li XunHuan said, “Maybe it’s because he only has two legs, so he can’t walk very fast.”

Following the two lanterns are two more lanterns.

Two people appeared in between them.

Both look very tall. Both wore bright yellow robes. The robe of the front person is very long, almost touching the ground, but it did not hinder his movement.

The person in the back wore a very short robe, barely reaching his knees.

The person in the front is empty-handed. It doesn’t look as if he’s carrying any weapons.

The person in the back has a sword on his waist.

Li XunHuan saw that the way he stashed his sword is similar to how Ah Fei does it, except Ah Fei puts his sword in the middle, the handle facing right.

But this person’s sword is stashed on the right side of his waist, the handle towards his left.

Can he be left-handed?

Li XunHuan raised his eyebrows.

He doesn't like to fight against a left-handed swordsman. Because that person's sword moves are the opposite of a normal person's, making them harder to fight against.

Besides, should this sword leave its sheath, it's bound to be very fast!

Li XunHuan knows this because of his years of experience in the martial world. He knows that this person will indeed be a formidable opponent!

Chapter 37: Old Man

While Li XunHuan concentrated on the left-handed swordsman, Sun XiaoHong's attention was on something else.

These two people walked slowly, and their steps are big. At first glance, their movements seem fairly ordinary. But Sun XiaoHong couldn't help but feel that something's wrong.

After a while, she realized what was wrong.

Normally, two people who walk together would be in sync with each other.

But these two people are different. As the first person's foot touches the ground, the second person's foot is in the air, right in the middle of his step.

It's as if all the feet belong to one person.

The first person takes the first step, the second person takes the second step, the first person takes the third step, and the second person takes the fourth step, in total harmony.

Sun XiaoHong has never seen two people walking like this before. She found it amusing.

Li XunHuan, however, did not find it amusing.

He felt scared.

Their harmony in walking showed that their minds are also in harmony.

Should they fight together, their moves would complement each other perfectly.

ShangGuan JinHong by himself is already one of the best fighters in the world. He can't imagine what would happen if Jin WuMing fought beside him.

Li XunHuan's heart sank.

He can't think of any way to find a weakness against the combined attack of these two people.

He also doesn't think that old man in the pavilion can send them away.

The old man in the pavilion still kept smoking his pipe. The light from the pipe sometimes bright, sometimes dim.

Suddenly, the light became incredibly bright, as bright as those lanterns.

Li XunHuan never knew anyone could make such bright light using a pipe.

ShangGuan JinHong also saw the light, because at this moment, he stopped.

The light in the pavilion disappeared.

After a long time, ShangGuan JinHong started to walk again, this time up to the pavilion, in front of that old man.

No matter where he goes, Jin WuMing would always be by him.

He's like ShangGuan JinHong's shadow.

The lanterns also made their way up the pavilion, surrounding the place with light.

ShangGuan JinHong did not speak. He kept his head low, as if he didn't want anyone to see his face.

But his eyes constantly gazed at the old man's hand, watching its every movement.

The old man took out some more opium, and put them into his pipe. Then he took out a flint and tinder.

His movement was quite slow, but very steady.

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly walked up to the old man, and picked up the paper match on the stone table.

He examined the match closely, before putting it close to the flint and tinder.

The match lit up with fire.

ShangGuan JinHong put the match into the pipe.

Although Li XunHuan and Sun XiaoHong hid far from the pavilion, they saw each movement clearly.

Li XunHuan asked, "Should we go over there?"

Sun XiaoHong shook her head, said, "No need. My grandpa

would find a way to get rid of them.”

She sounded very sure of herself, but Li XunHuan felt her hand turning very cold, as if she’s sweating cold sweat.

He obviously knows why she’s so worried.

The pipe is not long. ShangGuan JinHong could’ve taken this opportunity to seal any pressure point on the old man’s body.

But he did not do so. Is he waiting for an opening?

The old man tried to smoke his pipe.

But for some reason, perhaps the tobacco too moist, or it was stuck too tightly, the pipe never did light up. The paper match is nearly burnt.

ShangGuan JinHong held the paper match with his thumb and index finger, his other three fingers curved behind them.

The old man’s ring finger is only several inches away from ShangGuan JinHong’s wrist.

The fire burnt ShangGuan JinHong’s hand.

ShangGuan JinHong did not seem to notice this.

At this moment, ‘poof’ the pipe lit up.

Then it seemed as if ShangGuan JinHong’s three free fingers moved a bit, and so did the old man’s little finger and ring finger. All the movements are very quick and very light.

Then ShangGuan JinHong backed away.

The old man began to smoke his pipe again.

During this whole time, neither person even looked at the other one.

At this moment, Li XunHuan breathed a sigh of relief.

From the eyes of a normal person, it was simply a process of lighting up a pipe, but Li XunHuan realized that it was an amazing battle!

ShangGuan JinHong kept on waiting for his chance. Waiting for the old man to drop his guard, waiting for an opening to strike.

But he never got that chance.

Finally, he couldn't resist, he attacked with his three free fingers.

But it was quickly parried by the old man's ring and little fingers.

This is the type of battle only Li XunHuan can appreciate, since it incorporates the highest level of martial artistry.

Hidden behind those simple finger movements were thousands of variations.

Now, the danger has finally passed.

ShangGuan JinHong backed off three steps, returning to his previous position.

The old man smiled, and then said, "You're here?"

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Yes."

The old man said, "You're late!"

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Since you're here, does this mean that you knew I was going to take this route?"

The old man said, "I was just hoping that you won't come."

ShangGuan JinHong asked, "Why?"

The old man said, "Because even if you come, you still have to leave immediately."

ShangGuan JinHong took a deep breath, and then said, "What if I don't want to?"

The old man said calmly, "I know you'll leave."

ShangGuan JinHong tightened his hand.

Air of murder filled the pavilion.

The old man smoked the pipe yet again, then blew out the smoke.

The smoke came out in a straight line.

Then, in the middle of the air, it changed direction, and flew towards ShangGuan JinHong's face.

ShangGuan JinHong looked very shocked.

At this moment, the cloud of smoke dissipated.

ShangGuan JinHong bowed, and said, "Amazing."

The old man said, "You're too kind."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "It's been twenty-seven years since our last meeting. After today, I wonder when we'll meet again."

The old man said, "There's really no need for us to ever meet again."

ShangGuan JinHong thought for a moment, and wanted to say something. But he stayed silent.

The old man went back to smoking his pipe.

ShangGuan JinHong turned around, and left.

Jin WuMing followed him like a shadow.

Li XunHuan kept staring at the pavilion, thinking about something.

Right before ShangGuan JinHong left, he took a peek at where Li XunHuan was hiding. This was the first time Li XunHuan had ever seen ShangGuan JinHong's eyes.

From his eyes, Li XunHuan can conclude that ShangGuan JinHong's inner power is even better than the legend says!

But even worse are Jin WuMing's eyes.

Anyone who saw those eyes would feel disturbed, perhaps even find them disgusting.

Because that is not a pair of human eyes, nor a pair of animal eyes.

It's a pair of dead eyes!

It lacked emotions, life.

Sun XiaoHong did not notice any of this, because she was looking at Li XunHuan.

This was the first time she took a close look at Li XunHuan.

Even in the dark, she could see the contours on his face clearly, especially his eyes and nose.

His eyes are big and bright, filled with intelligence. His gaze carried some weariness, some disdain, but also a great deal of compassion.

His nose was tall and straight, like his mind, very righteous.

There are some wrinkles by the corner of his eyes, making him seem mature, charming, and gives off a sense of security. As if he's someone you can trust your life with.

He is exactly the type of man young women dream about at night.

Neither person noticed that old man coming towards them, smiling with satisfaction.

He looked at them for a long time, before asking, "Would you mind chatting with an old man?"

The moon has risen.

The old man and Li XunHuan walked in the front, with Sun XiaoHong behind them.

She did not speak, but her heart wanted to just scream with joy, because all she had to do is look ahead to see the man she admire the most, and the man she adores.

She's simply elated.

The old man said, "I've heard of you for a long time. I've long wanted to invite you for a drink. And now that we have met, I find that chatting with you great."

Li XunHuan smiled. As did Sun XiaoHong, who said, "But all he said was hello."

The old man said, "That's what makes him so great. He never asks any questions that he shouldn't ask. Anyone else would've asked for my identity."

Li XunHuan said, "Maybe it's because I already know your identity."

The old man said, "Really?"

Li XunHuan said, "There aren't many people in this world who can scare off ShangGuan JinHong."

The old man said, "If you think I scared off ShangGuan JinHong, you'd be wrong."

Before Li XunHuan could speak, he continued, "You probably have a good feel for ShangGuan JinHong's ability, as well as that young man behind him. Should they combine forces, no one in the world can withstand more than three hundred moves from them, much less defeat them."

Li XunHuan's eyes flashed, and then asked, "Not even you?"

The old man said, "Not even me."

Li XunHuan said, "But they did leave."

The old man said, "Maybe it's because they don't want to kill me yet. Or perhaps they found you here, and weren't sure if they can beat the two of us."

Sun XiaoHong couldn't help but cut in, "Even if they knew there was someone behind the tree, how can they be sure that person was Li... Li Tan Hua?"

The old man said, "Because should an elite fighter like Li TanHua feel enmity towards someone, his body would release air of murder."

Sun XiaoHong asked, "Air of murder?"

The old man said, "Correct. But only an expert like ShangGuan JinHong could feel such air."

Sun XiaoHong sighed, and said, "You're being too mysterious. I don't understand any of this."

The old man said, "Martial arts is a mysterious thing. Only a few people can understand."

Li XunHuan said, "No matter why they went away, I'm still grateful for your help."

The old man said with a smile, "I simply want people like you to live on, because there aren't enough of people like you in this world."

Li XunHuan could only smile, staying silent.

The old man said, "Although we just met, I know your temper well. So I won't try to convince you to leave."

He looked at Li XunHuan deep in the eyes, and added, "But I do want you to realize one thing."

Li XunHuan said, "Please do instruct."

The old man said, "Lin ShiYin does not need your protection. You can only help her by leaving."

Li XunHuan fidgeted.

The old man continued, "No one really wants to hurt Lin ShiYin. If they are trying to hurt her, it's because of you, because you are protecting her. If you leave her, no one would have any reason to hurt her."

Li XunHuan felt as if someone had just smacked him with a whip, making him sore all over.

The old man didn't seem to notice his pain. He simply continued, "If you're afraid that she may be too lonely, you don't have to worry about that any longer. Long Xiao4Yun is back. You'll only make things worse by staying."

Li XunHuan looked up into the dark sky, thought for a long time before sighing. He then said, "I was wrong, I was wrong, wrong again..."

He bent over, because he could no longer stand up straight.

Sun XiaoHong looked at him from the back, her heart full of pity, full of compassion.

She knows that her grandpa is trying to stimulate him, making him painful. She also knows that this is helping him, but she just couldn't bear to look at him like this.

The old man said, "Long Xiao4Yun came back because he has finally found a person who can kill you."

Li XunHuan said, "Why does need someone like that? I still think of him as my friend."

The old man said, "But he doesn't think like this. Do you know who he found?"

Li XunHuan said, "Hu BuGui?"

The old man said, "Correct, that crazy man indeed."

Sun XiaoHong cut in, "Is that crazy old man's kung fu really that good?"

The old man said, "There are two people in this world that I can't accurately gauge their fighting skills."

Sun XiaoHong asked, "Which two?"

The old man said, "One is Li Tan Hua, the other is Crazy Hu."

Li XunHuan said, "You're being too kind, elder. My friend Ah Fei's kung fu is just as good as mine. Plus there's Jin WuMing..."

The old man cut in, "But Ah Fei and Jin WuMing are in the same group, those that don't know any martial arts."

Li XunHuan said in a stunned manner, "Did you just say that

they don't know martial arts?"

The old man said, "Exactly. Not only that, they're not even fit to talk about martial arts.

They can only kill people. They only know how to kill people."

Li XunHuan said, "But Ah Fei is different from Jin WuMing."

The old man asked, "How so?"

Li XunHuan said, "They might kill people in the same way, but certainly not for the same purpose."

The old man said, "Really?"

Li XunHuan said, "Ah Fei only kills when he has to. Jin WuMing kills for the sake of killing."

Li XunHuan lowered his head, and added, "I..."

The old man cut in, "If you want to see him, there's still time. Otherwise, you might be too late!"

Li XunHuan stood back up, and said, "In that case, I'll go see him right now."

The old man said with a smile, "Do you know where he lives?"

Li XunHuan said, "I do."

Sun XiaoHong suddenly walked to the front of Li XunHuan and said, "But you still might not be able to find the place. Maybe I should take you there."

Before Li XunHuan could respond, the old man said coldly to Sun XiaoHong, "You still have things to do. Besides, he doesn't need your help."

Sun XiaoHong looked like she's about to cry.

Li XunHuan said, "Goodbye."

He wanted to say more, but he chose to only say this word.

The old man held up his thumb, and said, "Great. Leave when you want to leave. That's what true men do."

Li XunHuan really did leave immediately. He didn't even look back.

Sun XiaoHong watched him disappear, her eyes now red.

The old man patted her on the back, and asked, "Are you feeling very sad right now?"

Sun XiaoHong said, "No."

The old man chuckled. It's a kind and gentle chuckle. He said, "Oh, foolish girl. You think your grandpa doesn't know your heart?"

Sun XiaoHong bit her lips, but finally couldn't help asking, "If you knew, then why did you separate us?"

The old man said, "You have to realize that it's not easy to catch a man like Li XunHuan. If you want him, you must first get his heart. That's not easy to do at all. You must take it slowly, or you run the risk of scaring him off."

Although Li XunHuan acted as if he left decisively, he still felt a twinge of pain in his heart.

He doesn't know when he'll see Lin ShiYin again.

It's so painful to see her, and so painful to leave her.

In the past ten years, he has only seen her three times. Each time he only caught a glimpse of her, sometimes he didn't even converse with her. But there's a thread attached to his heart, a thread forever in the hands of Lin ShiYin. If he could just see her, just even knowing that she's near, he would be satisfied.

Chapter 38: Grandmother and Granddaughter

The autumn wind blew in his face. It felt like winter already.

One can barely feel the remnants of autumn.

Li XunHuan's heart is just like the autumn, withering away.

"You'll only increase her suffering by staying..."

The old man's words constantly rang in his ears.

He also realized that not only should he not see her again, he shouldn't even think about her.

That old man's not only a wise man, he's also a mysterious man, a preeminent martial artist. He also seemed to know just about everything in the world.

But what exactly is his identity? What's he hiding?

Li XunHuan admired Hunchback Sun.

Anyone who can wipe tables for fifteen years to return a favor should be admired.

But what's he doing there?

What's he guarding?

As for Sun XiaoHong... how could he not know her feelings?

But he can't accept that, he's afraid to.

Anyway, this whole family is just filled with mystery, so mysterious it's scary...

A village on the mountain.

At the foot of the mountain lies a wine shop.

The wine's not great, but it's very refreshing, obviously made from the spring water here.

The spring came from the back of the mountain, very clear. Li XunHuan knew that by following this stream, he'd reach a forest with a wood house.

Ah Fei and Lin XianEr live in that house.

Li XunHuan's face brightened as he thought about Ah Fei's handsome face, those sharp eyes, and that proud expression on his face.

Even more unforgettable are his rare smiles, and that fiery warmth buried inside his icy exterior.

He doesn't know how Ah Fei's has changed these past two years.

He doesn't know how Lin XianEr has treated Ah Fei.

Although she looks like an angel in heaven, she only takes men down to the pits of Hell.

Is Ah Fei in Hell right now?

Li XunHuan doesn't want to think about it, because he understands Ah Fei. He knows that Ah Fei would not mind living in Hell for love.

It's dusk.

Li XunHuan sat at the darkest corner of the shop.

This has been his habit, because from here he can easily see those who come in, but others can't easily see him.

He couldn't believe that the first person that came in is ShangGuan Fei.

He sat at the table closest to the door; his eyes stared outside, as if waiting for someone, waiting impatiently.

This is certainly quite different from his icy, calm expression last time.

He must be meeting someone very important. Plus he came alone, without servants, which meant that this meeting is very secretive.

There shouldn't be anyone important living in this remote area.

So who is he waiting for?

Does it concern Ah Fei and Lin XianEr?

Li XunHuan put his hand on his face, covering himself.

But it wasn't necessary, as ShangGuan Fei's eyes never did leave the door.

The shopkeeper finally lit up the candles.

ShangGuan Fei became more impatient, more irritated.

At this moment, two carriages appeared by the front door. The people carrying the carriages are several young men.

A very attractive thirteen or fourteen year old girl came down the first carriage, wearing a red robe.

ShangGuan Fei had just picked up his cup, but then immediately put it down.

This young girl walked up to ShangGuan Fei and said, "Sorry to keep you waiting."

ShangGuan Fei's eyes rolled, and asked, "Where is she? Can she not come?"

The red-robed girl smiled, and said, "Don't be so impatient. Just follow me."

Li XunHuan watched as ShangGuan Fei left the shop, and stepped into the second carriage. As Li XunHuan watched them leave, he found something peculiar.

These young men carrying the carriages are all quite strong. Those who picked up the first carriage did so easily.

But those who picked up the second one certainly labored.

Li XunHuan paid for his wine and left immediately.

He normally doesn't stick his nose into other people's businesses, but he felt a great need to follow ShangGuan Fei, to see the person he's meeting.

Because Li XunHuan felt that it must have something to do with Ah Fei.

The carriage entered the maple forest.

Suddenly laughter came from within the carriage.

This laugh is tender and lovely. Any man who heard this laugh would be drawn to it.

But if the person inside the carriage is ShangGuan Fei, then why is there a woman's laugh?

After a while, a gentle voice came from carriage, "Little Fei, don't be like this... we can't do it here..."

I can't believe you're just like all other men. You just want to bully me."

The sound became softer and softer, until Li XunHuan could no longer hear the words.

The carriage reached the top of the hill.

Li XunHun sighed.

So there are two people in this carriage.

One is ShangGuan Fei.

But who is the woman?

He's certainly experienced when it comes to women. He knows that many women like to fret, but not many are successful in seducing men by doing so.

He can almost yell out the name of the woman in the carriage.

But he can't yet, because he's not certain.

He never makes quick judgments, because he doesn't want to make a bad judgment again. One wrong judgment is one too many for him.

One wrong judgment wrecked his whole life, and another person's life.

The carriage stopped by a small house. The second carriage's carriers are wiping sweat off of their faces.

The girl in the front carriage got off, and walked up to the door of the building.

Bang, Bang, Bang, she knocked the door three times, and it opened.

Someone finally came out of the second carriage.

A woman.

Li XunHuan could not see her face, but her clothing and hair are both very disorganized, her body very shapely, her movements alluring.

Li XunHuan thought this person looked familiar.

Only to see her walk up to the door, waved at ShangGuan

Fei inside the carriage, and walked into the building.

Li XunHuan could only see half of her face.

He could finally be certain.

She is indeed Lin XianEr!

So if Lin XianEr lived here, then where's Ah Fei?

Li XunHuan really wanted to ask her, but he decided not to.

He's not a true gentleman, but he would do many things that 'gentlemen' would not do, nor want to do.

His way of doing things would seem mind-boggling to many people.

While many people in the world wish for Li XunHuan to just simply die, others would willingly give their life to save his.

It's now totally dark.

Li XunHuan still waited outside.

As he waited, he thought of many things.

He remembered the day he first met Ah Fei.

He wasn't lonely at that time, because Tie ChuanJia was with him.

He then thought of Tie ChuanJia, that loyal and kind face, and that iron armor he had on...

Unfortunately, although his chest is strong as steel, his heart

is so fragile, so easily moved. That's why he's more often miserable than happy.

As he thought more and more, Li XunHuan suddenly felt like drinking again.

He took out his wine bottle, and finished all the wine in it.

Then he began to cough.

At this moment, the door opened. ShangGuan Fei came out, looking happier than usual, but also a bit tired.

A hand came out, reaching for his hand.

Some whispers can be heard, perhaps whispers of goodbye.

After a long time, that pair of hands slowly broke apart.

ShangGuan Fei walked very slowly, and kept turning around to look back, as if he doesn't want to leave yet.

The door closed.

ShangGuan Fei looked up into the sky, his steps suddenly became quicker, but his expression is kind of wacky, sometimes smiling, sometimes sighing.

Is he also in Hell?

The light in the house is very calm, turning the window-paper red.

ShangGuan Fei finally left. Li XunHuan suddenly felt sorry for this youngster.

Li XunHuan sighed, and walked up to the door.

Bang. Li XunHuan knocked once. Bang, Bang. He then knocked twice in a row, just like that red-robed girl did.

The door indeed opened.

A person said, "You..."

She just said one word before she saw Li XunHuan. Then she tried to quickly shut the door.

But Li XunHuan had already blocked the door from closing.

The person who opened the door was not Lin XianEr, nor that red-robed girl, but a white-haired old lady.

She stared shockingly at Li XunHuan, and asked, "Who... who are you? What are you doing here?"

Li XunHuan said, "I just came to see an old friend."

The old lady asked, "Old friend? Who's your old friend?"

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "She'll know me when she sees me."

As he said this, he entered the room.

The old lady was afraid to block his path, but she yelled, "There is no friend of yours here, just me and my granddaughter."

There are only three rooms in this house. Lin XianEr isn't in any of them.

The red-robed girl looked terrified, so terrified her face became all white. She said loudly, "Grandma? Is this a bandit?"

The old lady looked so scared she couldn't even respond.

Li XunHuan doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. He asked, "Do I look like a bandit?"

The little girl bit her lips and said, "If you're not a bandit, why did you force yourself into this house at midnight?"

Li XunHuan said, "I'm here to find Miss Lin."

After seeing him talk very nicely, the little girl became less afraid. She blinked her eyes and said, "But there's no Miss Lin here, only Miss Zhou."

Is that Lin XianEr's fake name?

Li XunHuan immediately asked, "Where's Miss Zhou?"

The little girl pointed at her own nose, and said, "My surname is Zhou. So obviously I am Miss Zhou."

Li XunHuan smiled.

He felt like an idiot.

The little girl also seemed to find this quite amusing. She said, "But I don't know you at all. So why did you come look for me?"

Li XunHuan smiled bitterly, said, "I'm looking for a big girl, not a little girl."

The little girl said, "There are no big girls here."

Li XunHuan asked, "You mean no one came into the house recently?"

The little girl said, "Of course, some people have come..."

Li XunHuan cut in, "Who?"

The little girl said, "My grandma and I. We just came back from the town."

She rolled her eyes, and added, "Only the two of us live here. I'm the little one, my grandma is the big one, but it's been a long time since she was a girl. So I'm guessing you're not looking for her, right?"

Li XunHuan smiled again.

He found that he smiled a lot when he felt stupid.

He thought he saw Lin XianEr entered the house.

Was he hallucinating?

Was that lady in the carriage this old lady?

The old lady suddenly kneeled on the ground, begging, "We're a poor family, and there is nothing valuable here. If you want something, just take it and leave us be."

Li XunHuan said, "Fine."

There's a bottle of wine on the table.

Li XunHuan picked up the bottle and walked out the door.

Only to hear the little girl smilingly whispered to herself, "So he wasn't a bandit after all, just a drunkard."

Chapter 39: Ah Fei

The moon is still in the sky.

The waterfall under the moonlight look like sparkling strips of silver.

Li XunHuan followed the water, walking slowly. He doesn't want to reach Ah Fei's home before morning, as to not disturb his sleep.

He never liked to disturb people.

But no matter who disturbed him, no matter the time, he wouldn't care.

That old lady could not have been Lin XianEr in disguise.

So where is Lin XianEr?

Li XunHuan rubbed his eyes, "Was I delusional?"

The sun finally rose, the autumn almost gone, the plum flowers beginning to blossom.

Li XunHuan smelled a faint fragrance, looked up, and saw a plum forest.

Deep inside the forest is a wooden house.

Li XunHuan stared at the forest like an idiot.

By the plum forest is the source of the spring water for the river.

The water flowed down from the mountain, by the forest. The scenery looked like it should be a painting.

In the painting is a person.

Li XunHuan couldn't see this person's face, only that he dressed very neatly, wearing a new, green robe, and combed his hair nicely.

He carried a water bucket across the forest, into the wooden house.

This person's build is similar to Ah Fei's, but Li XunHuan was certain that he's not Ah Fei.

So who is he?

Li XunHuan can't think of anyone like this who would live with Ah Fei.

He rushed over to the house.

The door is open, and there's nothing luxurious inside, but everything is sparkly clean.

There's an old-fashioned square table made for eight people. That youngster with the new robe took out a towel from the bucket, and began to scrub the table.

He scrubbed even more slowly, more carefully, than Hunchback Sun, as if there can't be a tiny speck of dirt left.

Li XunHuan walked up from behind, and found this person's back look like Ah Fei's.

But he can't possibly be Ah Fei.

Li XunHuan can't even picture Ah Fei cleaning tables, but he wanted to ask this person for Ah Fei's location.

Li XunHuan coughed lightly, hoping this person would turn around and notice to him.

This person does not have fast reflexes, but he did eventually turn around.

Li XunHuan stood there in shock.

The person who cannot possibly be Ah Fei... is Ah Fei.

Ah Fei's face did not change. His eyes are still big, his nose still straight. He still looks handsome, even more handsome than he used to be.

But his expression changed, changed a great deal.

He had lost his past magnetism, the pride, and the loneliness. He now looked very gentle, almost like a stiff.

He might look much better now, cleaner now, but he had lost his charisma.

Is this really Ah Fei?

Li XunHuan can't accept it, can't accept this neatly dressed youngster with a towel is the Ah Fei he used to know!

Ah Fei also saw Li XunHuan.

He didn't seem to expect Li XunHuan, and his face straightened. Gradually, he began to smile... thankfully, his smile has not changed.

Li XunHuan also smiled.

Although he smiled on the surface, his heart sank.

They simply stared at each other, both smiling. Neither person moved, nor spoke, but their eyes became moist, became red... After a while, Ah Fei finally said, "It's you."

Li XunHuan said, "It's me."

Ah Fei said, "You finally came."

Li XunHuan said, "I finally came."

Ah Fei said, "I knew you'd come."

They spoke slowly, in coarse voices. When they talked to here, both closed their mouths again.

But just at this moment, Ah Fei rushed out from the house, and Li XunHuan rushed in. The two people met at the door, almost colliding with each other, and shook hands.

They almost stopped breathing. After a while, Li XunHuan finally said, "How have you been these past two years?"

Ah Fei slowly nodded his head, and said, "I... I've been great. How about you?"

Li XunHuan said, "Me? Still the same."

He picked up that bottle of wine, and said with a smile, "Look, I'm still drinking. Even my coughing problem seemed to have been washed away by my drinking. You..."

Before he could continue, Li XunHuan began to cough again.

Ah Fei looked at him quietly, a tiny bit of tears came out of his eyes.

Suddenly they heard someone say, "Hey, why haven't you offered a seat to brother Li yet? It's rude to keep the guest at the door, you know."

Lin XianEr finally appeared.

She hasn't changed at all.

She's still that young, that beautiful. Her smile is still that alluring, that adorable. Her eyes still shine as brightly as the stars in the sky.

She just stood there, looking warmly at Li XunHuan, and spoke in a gentle manner, "It's been two years. How come you haven't come earlier? Have you forgotten about us already?"

Anyone who heard this sentence would've thought that Li XunHuan had long known about this place, that he simply haven't had the time to visit them yet.

Li XunHuan smiled, and said, "How can I come when you haven't a carriage to take me here?"

Lin XianEr blinked her eyes, and said, "Now that you've brought up carriages, I really would like to ride one

someday, just to see how it feels.”

Li XunHuan’s eyes brightened, and asked, “You’ve never ridden in a carriage before?”

Lin XianEr lowered her head, and whispered, “How could a person like myself afford that type of luxury?”

Li XunHuan said, “But I saw someone riding in a carriage last night. She looked just like you.”

His eyes stared intently at Lin XianEr.

But Lin XianEr did not show any signs of panic. She simply smiled, “Then that means I must’ve been sleepwalking... right?”

That question was directed at Ah Fei.

Ah Fei immediately said, “She always goes to sleep very early at night. She never leaves the house after dark.”

Li XunHuan found his heart tying another knot.

He knows that Ah Fei would never lie to him, but if Lin XianEr was at home, then who was that woman in the carriage?

Lin XianEr went over to Ah Fei’s side, and straightened his robe. With infinite warmth she said softly, “Did you sleep well last night?”

Ah Fei nodded.

Lin XianEr said, “Why don’t you take brother Li for a walk, while I make some dishes.”

She looked at Li XunHuan and said, "The plum flowers are blooming. I know plum is brother Li's favorite type of flower, right?"

Ah Fei's walk has changed too.

Before, he always stood straight, and his muscles were relaxed.

Other people found walking to be a chore, but for him, it was rest.

Now his body is no longer that straight, his thoughts seemingly on something else, making him nervous.

So his muscles were obviously not relaxed.

After walking for a long time, Li XunHuan still remained silent.

He really doesn't know what to say.

He wanted to ask Ah Fei, "Why did you come here? Has Lin XianEr changed her from ways? What happened to her treasures?"

But he did not ask any of those questions.

He wanted to avoid bringing up Ah Fei's past.

After a long time, Ah Fei finally spoke, "I'm really sorry."

Li XunHuan sighed and said, "You pretended to be the Plum Flower Bandit just to save me. You were willing to sacrifice your life for me. Why is there a need to apologize?"

Ah Fei didn't seem to hear these words. He continued, "I should've at least said goodbye when I left."

Li XunHuan said, "I know you had your reasons. I don't blame you."

Ah Fei said, "I know I made a mistake, but I just couldn't kill her. I... I can't leave her."

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "Love is human nature. There's nothing wrong with it. Why do you blame yourself for falling in love?"

Ah Fei said, "But... but..."

He suddenly became very emotional, yelling, "But I felt that I've wronged you, as well as all other victims of the Plum Flower Bandit."

Li XunHuan paused for a second, and then asked inquisitively, "But she has reformed, right?"

Ah Fei said, "Before we left, she gave back all the stolen goods to their rightful owners."

Li XunHuan said, "Then what's wrong? Everyone deserves a second chance."

He doesn't want to keep talking about this so he changed the subject, "Look, the plum flowers have blossomed."

Ah Fei said, "Yes."

Li XunHuan said, "Do you know how many are on that tree?"

Ah Fei said, "Seventeen."

Li XunHuan's heart sank, as did his face.

Because he had also counted plum flowers before.

Only a very lonely person would count plum flowers.

Ah Fei raised his head and said, "Look, another one's blossoming, but why do they bloom so early? The earlier they bloom, the earlier they wither."

The wooden house has five rooms, a living room, a storage room, a kitchen, and two rooms with beds.

The bigger bedroom is delicately furnished, including a large makeup counter.

Ah Fei said, "Lin XianEr sleeps here."

The smaller one is also very clean, but very simple.

Ah Fei said, "This is my room."

Li XunHuan disheartened.

Now he realized that Ah Fei and Lin XianEr had been sleeping in separate rooms for the past two years. And Ah Fei's still a young man.

He was quite shocked, but also found himself admiring Ah Fei.

Ah Fei smiled, and said, "You must find it strange that I've been sleeping a lot the past two years."

Li XunHuan said, "Really?"

Ah Fei said, "I always go to sleep before dark, and then sleep soundly until the next morning. I never wake up at night."

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "When your life becomes orderly, it's quite natural to sleep well."

Chapter 40: Infidelity

Ah Fei said, "I've been living quite peacefully these past two years... I've never been so peaceful before. She... she's very nice to me."

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "I'm happy to hear you say this. I'm very happy..."

He doesn't want Ah Fei to realize that his smile was quite unnatural, so he turned his head away while he spoke. After looking around, he asked, "Where's your sword?"

Ah Fei said, "I no longer use the sword."

Li XunHuan became really shocked, and asked, "Why?"

Ah Fei said, "Sword is a weapon, and will bring back memories of the old days."

Li XunHuan asked, "Did she persuade you to do this?"

Ah Fei said, "She's also willing to leave everything behind, so we can start fresh together."

Li XunHuan nodded, and said, "Great. Great. Great..."

He wanted to say more, but Lin XianEr cut him off, yelling from inside the house, "Lunch is ready. Why don't you come back in to eat?"

There aren't many dishes, but they're all exquisite.

He couldn't believe Lin XianEr could make such great dishes.

Other than dishes, there is also a wine bottle, but inside the bottle is tea.

Lin XianEr said, "In such a rural place, we don't have wine. So we can only serve you tea instead."

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "But thankfully, I brought my own wine..."

He looked around, before he finally found that wine he brought. He first poured some in his cup, and then said to Ah Fei, "Here, I'll pour you some."

Ah Fei did not respond.

Ah Fei then suddenly said, "I quit drinking."

Li XunHuan was shocked yet again, and asked, "Quit? Why?"

Ah Fei's face was expressionless.

Lin XianEr said, "Alcohol is bad for the body. Don't you think so, brother Li?"

Li XunHuan thought for a while before smiling, "That's right. If you keep drinking, you'll end up like me. If I could turn back time ten or twenty years, I'd probably quit drinking too."

Ah Fei lowered his head, and began to eat.

He wasn't focused on eating, because when he picked up a meatball, he dropped it on the table.

Lin XianEr said to him, "Look at you, still like a little kid. So careless."

Ah Fei slowly picked up that meatball.

Lin XianEr said to Ah Fei, "How can you still eat something that's now on the table?"

She picked up a meatball from the plate and put it in Ah Fei's mouth.

The dinner was even better than lunch. After that, it became dark.

Li XunHuan slept in Ah Fei's room, while Ah Fei slept in the living room.

Lin XianEr personally gave Ah Fei some new, clean bed sheets, then put some clean clothing on Ah Fei's bed.

"I like for my Little Fei to change clothes everyday."

Before going to bed, she went to get some water, and watched Ah Fei clean his face. Afterwards, she took the towel and cleaned Ah Fei's ears.

When Ah Fei lied down to sleep, she made sure he's covered tightly.

"Today's a bit cold, so make sure you don't catch a cold."

She attended to Ah Fei in every single way imaginable. Even

the best mothers might not be this considerate to her son.

Ah Fei should be incredibly happy.

But for some reason, Li XunHuan doesn't know whether Ah Fei's happy or miserable.

He also doesn't know if this whole thing is funny, or sad.

Ah Fei really did fall asleep quickly.

But Li XunHuan couldn't sleep. He hasn't gone to bed this early since three. He couldn't sleep this early even if his life depended on it.

Lin XianEr's room is also quiet, as if she's also asleep.

Li XunHuan put on his robe and left the room.

He wanted to chat with Ah Fei.

But Ah Fei slept way too soundly. He can't wake Ah Fei up even by pushing him.

Even a pig can't sleep this soundly, much less the vigilant Ah Fei.

Li XunHuan stood by Ah Fei's bed, and remembered something.

"She goes to sleep early every night... she never leaves the house after dark."

"Everyday I sleep right after dark, and won't wake up until the next morning."

Li XunHuan remembered that they had pork-rib soup tonight. It was very tasty, and Ah Fei had a lot of it. Lin XianEr also tried to persuade Li XunHuan to have a lot of the soup.

Fortunately, there are bamboo shoots in the soup. Li XunHuan never eats bamboo shoots. But he's also not someone who refuses other's kindness.

So although he didn't reject Lin XianEr, he did give the soup to Ah Fei while Lin XianEr went into the kitchen to check on food.

He remembered that when Lin XianEr came back, she smiled at Li XunHuan's empty bowl.

What kind of sleeping powder was in the soup?

Obviously, Ah Fei slept soundly at night because of this sleeping powder.

So he can't possibly know what Lin XianEr do at night.

But why doesn't Lin XianEr simply put some poison in the bowl?

Obviously because Ah Fei's still useful to her.

Li XunHuan became extremely angry. He turned around and knocked loudly on Lin XianEr's door.

There was no response.

Li XunHuan had never kicked down someone's door before.

But today he made an exception.

There was indeed no one in the room. So where did Lin XianEr went?

Li XunHuan thought Lin XianEr must be at that other house.

When he reached this house, he debated as to whether he should rush in or not.

While he was thinking, the door opened.

A person came out slowly, looking kind of like ShangGuan Fei, very happy, but a bit tired.

The light inside the house shined on his face.

Li XunHuan rarely gets shocked, but he felt another shock when he saw this person's face.

He never thought this person would be Guo SongYang!

Only to see a hand inside held Guo SongYang's hand.

They seemingly were whispering goodbyes.

After a while, Guo SongYang left.

He left slowly, and kept looking back, as if he didn't want to leave yet.

The door is already closed.

Does this door lead to Heaven, or Hell?

Li XunHuan not only felt sad, but also angry. He's sad because of Ah Fei, and also angry because of Ah Fei.

He has never been so angry before in his life.

He almost wanted to immediately appear and expose this whole sham, but he didn't. Because Guo SongYang is his friend, and a true man.

He doesn't want to trouble Guo SongYang.

Only to so see Guo SongYang stare into the sky, and sighed deeply.

After walking a couple of more steps, he suddenly stopped, and yelled loudly, "Who's hiding? Show yourself!"

Guo SongYang really is a true elite martial artist. His alertness and reflexes are much better than ShangGuan Fei's.

No matter where he has been, he still keeps his mind clear, but even he couldn't guess that the person in hiding was Li XunHuan.

It's not far from that house to the tavern at the bottom of the mountain. The two people did not speak much on the way, nor did they say anything they really wanted to.

But some things must be said sooner or later.

They sat on the roof of the tavern, and began to drink.

Li XunHuan has drunk in a lot of places, but never on a roof. He found that this really is a great place to drink.

Now, the jugs are only half full.

Guo SongYang suddenly said, "You... you obviously know what I went to do in that house, right?"

Li XunHuan said, "I know you're a man."

Guo SongYang said, "You also must know who's in that house, right?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

Guo SongYang said, "I... don't seek her often."

Li XunHuan said, "Really?"

Guo SongYang said, "I only visit her when I'm unhappy."

Li XunHuan nodded.

Guo SongYang said, "I know many women, but she's the best."

Li XunHuan said, "Do you know what kind of a woman she is?"

Guo SongYang took another sip and said, "I've known her for quite a while."

Li XunHuan said, "How does she treat you?"

Guo SongYang said, "How does she treat me? Women like her treat every man the same. She only looks to see if that man is of value to her."

Li XunHuan said, "So you know she's using you?"

Guo SongYang said, "Of course. But I don't mind, because

I'm using her at the same time. So what if I have to pay a price for pleasure?"

Li XunHuan said, "That is indeed quite fair. But... do you know that this might hurt someone else?"

Guo SongYang asked, "Who?"

Li XunHuan said, "Obviously the man who loves her."

Guo SongYang sighed, and said, "Sometimes I really don't understand, why do women always hurt the one who loves them the most?"

Li XunHuan said, "Probably because she can only hurt the man who loves her. If he didn't love her, then he wouldn't care no matter what she did."

Guo SongYang said with a smile, "You seem to know a lot about women."

Li XunHuan said, "No man really knows about women. If someone thinks that, then that person is bound to suffer more than others."

Guo SongYang stayed silent for a long time before asking, "Ah Fei really loves her?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

Guo SongYang said, "I know she's Ah Fei's friend, and that you are Ah Fei's friend."

Li XunHuan did not respond.

Guo SongYang said, "But I am not Ah Fei's friend. I have

never met him.”

Li XunHuan said, “You don’t have to explain. This isn’t your fault.”

Guo SongYang became silent again for a while, before asking, “Is Ah Fei still with her?”

Li XunHuan said, “Yes.”

Li XunHuan sighed and added, “Although he loves her a lot more than you do, her relationship with him is actually less intimate than with you.”

Guo SongYang said with surprise, “You mean they never...”

Li XunHuan smiled bitterly, “She can do such a thing with any man, except for him.”

Guo SongYang asked, “Why?”

Li XunHuan said, “Because he respects her, and never push her. She is a goddess to him. Lin XianEr obviously wishes to keep this image in his mind.”

He added, “But women are born to be loved, not respected. If a man respects a woman who deserves no respect, than he will only receive pain and suffering.”

Guo SongYang said, “So does this mean that Ah Fei has no idea what she’s doing?”

Li XunHuan said, “Absolutely no idea.”

Guo SongYang asked, “Why don’t you tell him?”

Li XunHuan said, "Even if I tell him, he won't believe me. When a man falls in love, his ears will become deaf, his eyes will become blind, and even a smart man would turn stupid."

Guo SongYang said, "You want me to tell him?"

Li XunHuan said, "He's a great youngster, and my friend. I don't want him to throw away his life for a woman like her."

Guo SongYang did not respond.

Li XunHuan said, "I have never asked anyone for a favor before, but this time..."

Guo SongYang cut him off, and said, "But... will he believe me?"

Li XunHuan said, "At least she can't totally deny her relationship with you."

Guo SongYang stood up, and said, "Fine. I'll go with you."

Li XunHuan shook his hands tightly, and said, "Thank you. I believe you will also become great friends with Ah Fei."

Guo SongYang said, "I only need one friend. I'm already very grateful to have a friend like you."

The wooden house is empty!

Ah Fei's bed last night is still in the living room. There are still leftover teas from last night. But the soup cauldron is now empty, and very clean.

Lin XianEr's room is still the same as last night, with wind

blowing through the door Li XunHuan knocked down last night.

Chapter 41: The Devilish Little Girl

Ah Fei's room looked just as it did last night, even that robe is still on his bed.

But his person is gone, in a hurry too.

Li XunHuan could not believe that Ah Fei would leave without saying goodbye to him. He coughed as he examined the surroundings.

Guo SongYang held his hands behind his back, and looked at him quietly. He then said calmly, "You said that Ah Fei's your friend."

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

Guo SongYang said, "But you don't even know that he had already left."

Li XunHuan paused for a moment before forcing a smile. He said, "Perhaps he was in some sort of trouble. Perhaps..."

Guo SongYang said, "Perhaps, he's just very good at following the orders of a woman."

He didn't give Li XunHuan a chance to respond, and followed up with another question, "Did he live here for a

long time?’

Li XunHuan said, “Almost two years.”

Guo SongYang said, “But I have been meeting her in that small building for more than two years. This might be her old home.”

Li XunHuan laughed bitterly, and said, “A devious person like her should have more than one hiding place.”

Guo SongYang sighed, and said, “But unfortunately, I know of no other hiding place.”

Li XunHuan did not respond. He simply walked into Lin XianEr’s room.

In the room are a bed, a closet, and a table.

There aren’t many clothes in the closet. The ones in there are rather plain. There’s a small makeup counter on the table, without any makeup powder on it.

Obviously, she used the other house to dress herself up at night.

Guo SongYang said, “When I came out, she was still in that other house. But she has certainly been here to take Ah Fei away, yet we saw no trail leading to this house on our way here.”

Li XunHuan said solemnly, “That’s because she used another path.”

Guo SongYang said, “Another path? But mountains surround this area. What other routes are there?”

Li XunHuan suddenly flipped over the bed.

There's a secret path under the bed.

Li XunHuan already knew where the path would lead.

Guo SongYang asked, "Where do think this path lead to?"

Li XunHuan said, "Under the bed in her other little building."

Guo SongYang said, "My thoughts exactly."

He snickered, "From one bed to the other. She really doesn't waste any time."

Li XunHuan said casually, "She has a lot of appointments, so her time is obviously very precious."

Guo SongYang's face changed... Although he had always known what she does, he still felt unsettled when it's brought up."

Men always mock women for being petty, but men are usually just as petty, and probably a lot more selfish.

Even if a man has thousands of women, he still wants every single one of them to just be with him. Even if he no longer loves a woman, he still wants that woman to be in love with him.

The path can't be too long.

The exit is indeed the bed of that small building.

This bed is much better than the one they crawled under;

it's very soft, furnished with very extravagant sheets and pillows.

Obviously, Lin XianEr isn't here, only that red-robed girl.

She sat by the makeup counter, sewing a pillow with a picture of swans swimming on water.

She did not look shocked upon seeing the two men coming out from under the bed.

Looks like she knew they were going to appear.

She looked at them out of the corner of her eyes, and said, "So you knew each other already."

Guo SongYang, with a stern look, said loudly, "Are the only person here?"

The little girl said, "Why are you so mean to me? I made the bed and the sheets every time you came here. Did you forget those things?"

Guo SongYang could not respond.

She then switched her attention onto Li XunHuan, and said, "So you're Li Tan Hua?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

The little girl said, "Everyone else say that Li XunHuan not only has incredible kung fu, he's also very smart and very knowledgeable. I am quite shocked that even you can be fooled."

She then said sweetly, "I'm terribly sorry to have lied to you

on your last visit.”

Li XunHuan said, “No problem. It’s actually fun to be deceived by a kid once in a while. Since you fooled me last time, I felt a lot younger.”

The little girl kept staring at him. From her look, she must be thinking that this man is quite interesting. Of course, it’s obviously rare for anyone meet someone like Li XunHuan.

She said with a smile, “I think that you look quite young even if I hadn’t fooled you. If you get fooled a few more time, you’d probably turn into a kid.”

Li XunHuan said, “But I must be more careful in the future. Otherwise, don’t you think a forty year old kid would be quite bizarre?”

The little girl laughed, and said, “Don’t worry, I only lied to you last time because you were a stranger. My grandmother always told me to never tell the truth in front of a stranger, or I might get spirited away by them.”

Li XunHuan said, “What about now?”

The little girl said, “Now that I know you, I obviously won’t lie to you again.”

Li XunHuan said, “In that case, let me ask you this. Have you seen anyone coming out of this bed recently?”

The little girl said, “No.”

She blinked her eyes, and added, “But I have seen someone passing by outside.”

Li XunHuan asked, "Who?"

The little girl said, "A man. I don't know him."

She smiled brightly and added, "Other than you, I don't know many man."

Li XunHuan pretended not have heard that last sentence, and asked, "What did he want?"

The little girl said, "That man looked scary, with a thick beard and a large knife scar on his face. He asked as he came in, 'Do you know Li XunHuan? Is he going to be here?'"

Li XunHuan said, "What did you say?"

The little girl said, "Since I don't know him, I simply lied. I said that I know you, and that you'll be here soon."

Li XunHuan asked, "Then what did he say?"

The little girl said, "Then he gave me a letter, asking me to give it to you."

Li XunHuan said, "So you accepted the letter?"

The little girl said, "Of course I did. Otherwise, wouldn't it show that I was lying? This person was scary. If he knew that I had lied, he'd likely break my head."

She smiled, and added, "A little girl with her head broken would be in a lot pain, don't you think?"

Li XunHuan also smiled, and said, "A little boy with his head broken would also be in a lot pain."

This little girl has a special skill; she can make all her words sound like the truth.

Anyone else would have asked her things like, “Where’s the man who delivered the letter? Why did he leave the letter here?”

But Li XunHuan did not ask these questions.

He also has a special skill. No matter what someone else says, he can always look as if he believes every single word. That’s why people always tend to think that they have fooled him.

The little girl took out the letter, and it does indeed have his name written on the envelope. The letter is sealed, which meant that the girl did not know it’s content.

The letter said, “I have always admired Mr. Li XunHuan. Let’s meet at the foot of this spring on the first day of the tenth month. Do not disappoint me.”

The person who signed the letter was none other than ShangGuan JinHong!

This letter is quite simple, and quite polite. But anyone who receives this letter would most likely start writing his will, or at least be scared to death.

If ShangGuan JinHong challenged someone, then how long can that person live?

Li XunHuan slowly put the letter back into the envelope, and put it in his robe.

He’s still smiling.

The little girl had been examining him this whole time. She couldn't help asking, "What did the letter say?"

Li XunHuan said, "Nothing important."

The little girl said, "Based on that big smile on your face, I bet it's a woman who wrote you that letter."

Li XunHuan said, "You guessed right."

The little girl rolled her eyes, and said, "Does the letter say that she wants to meet you?"

Li XunHuan said, "Right again."

The little girl smirked, "If I had known that a woman wrote it, I would have never told you about the letter."

Li XunHuan said, "But if you hadn't given me the letter, she would be heartbroken."

The little girl glared at him, and asked, "What kind of a person is she? Is she beautiful?"

Li XunHuan said, "Of course she is, or I'd have thrown this letter away. An ugly woman is even scarier than a stupid man."

The little girl said, "How old is she?"

Li XunHuan said, "She's not old."

The little girl forcibly stuck her sewing needle to the wooden edge of her embroidery hoop, and said angrily, "Since you have such a beautiful lady waiting to meet you, why aren't

you rushing out to meet her? Why are you still here?"

Li XunHuan said, "You know, it's not proper for the host to drive away the guests."

The little girl said coldly, "Even if I don't ask you to go, you'd still leave."

Li XunHuan said, "What if I want to stay?"

The little girl said, "If you want to stay, I'd obviously treat you as an honored guest."

Li XunHuan said, "Really?"

The little girl said, "Of course. I might not be very generous, but I'm not stingy either. If you stay for ten days, then I'll take care of you for ten days. If you want to stay forever, I'll... I'll still let you."

As she spoke, her face became red.

If a girl's face could become red, it meant that she's no longer little.

Li XunHuan said, "Fine. Then I'll stay..."

Before he could finish, the little girl had already jumped up. She quickly asked, "You're not lying?"

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "Of course I'm not lying. How could I leave when I have found such a good host like you?"

The little girl said with a bright smile, "I know you like to drink. I'll get you some wine. There might not be much of anything else here, but there are wines, enough to drown

you.”

Li XunHuan said, “Other than wine, I’d also like some pieces of wood, the harder, the better.

The little girl asked with a puzzled look on her face, “Wood? What do you need wood for? Do you actually eat wood while drinking wine? Your teeth must be amazing.”

As she talked, she began to laugh, and then said, “But since you asked for wood, I’ll give you some. I can give you anything. Even if you want to grab the moon in the sky, I’ll give you a ladder.”

Guo SongYang had been examining Li XunHuan’s face this whole time. He suddenly said, “I don’t eat wood. I eat eggs. Any kind of eggs, chicken eggs, duck eggs, sparrow eggs, salted eggs... as long as it’s eggs, it’s fine. The more, the better.”

The little girl frowned. She glared at him and said, “You’re going to stay too?”

Guo SongYang said, “With a host like you, how can I possibly leave?”

The little girl scowled as she turned around and walked out. She muttered to herself, “Why are there so many people who can’t get a clue. Do they have nothing better to do than sticking their nose into places they don’t belong?”

Chapter 42: Malice

The room was big, the bed sheets were newly changed, very clean. The teapot wasn't broken in any way, while the teacups were very clean.

Lin XianEr sat on the bed, patching up a tear in a man's robe. She's not as good with the needle as she is with the sword, so she sometimes pricked her own hand.

Ah Fei stood by the window, looking at the moon outside, thinking about something.

Lin XianEr sewed a button unto the robe and shook her head. She said, "I really can't get used to living in a hotel. Even the best hotel room seems like a cage to me. When I enter, I become queasy."

Ah Fei said, "Yeah."

Lin XianEr said, "I've always heard that there's no place like home. Don't you think so?"

Ah Fei said, "Yeah."

Lin XianEr rolled her eyes and said, "You're unhappy that I forced you to leave our home, right?"

Ah Fei said, "No."

Lin XianEr sighed, and said, "I know Li XunHuan's your friend. I also like for you to have a friend like him. But we have already decided to start over, so we must leave him. A person like him spreads trouble and misery to wherever he goes."

She then added tenderly, "We promised to never to get into these troubles again, didn't we?"

Ah Fei said, "Yes."

Lin XianEr said, "Besides, although he's a dependable friend, he's still a drunkard. All drunkards have annoying problems, problems that they themselves may not even realize."

She sighed again and said, "That's why he would break down my door, to try and make me..."

Ah Fei suddenly turned around and stared at her. He said, "Please do not talk about this again, ok?"

Lin XianEr smiled tenderly, and said, "I've already forgiven him, because he's your friend."

Ah Fei's face turned pale and miserable. He said, "I don't have any friends... just you."

Lin XianEr stood up and put her hands on his, then pulled him to her side. She said tenderly, "You're the only person in my life too."

Her face touched Ah Fei's, and said, "I only need you. Other than you, I don't need anything else."

Ah Fei opened his hands and arms, and grabbed her tightly.

Lin XianEr said, "Why won't you marry me openly, so everyone will know that I'm your wife? What are you afraid of? Can you not forgive me for my past? Do you not truly love me?"

Agony appeared on Ah Fei's face. He released his hands from her body.

But Lin XianEr still held on to him tightly.

Ah Fei now lied on the bed, about to fall apart.

His heart filled with hatred, but also pain.

He hated himself, because he should not be doing this, but he couldn't help it. Sometimes he simply wished to die, but he just couldn't leave her.

Lin XianEr combed her hair in front of the mirror. Her cheeks bright red, her big, shiny eyes looked blissful.

She can do it with everyone else, but not with Ah Fei.

A little smile appeared on the side of Lin XianEr's lips. Her smile was very beautiful, but also very cruel. She absolutely loved to torture men, nothing else in the world could make her happier.

At this moment, someone knocked loudly on the door.

A voice yelled, "Open the door. I know you're in there. I saw you."

Ah Fei quickly got up, and yelled, "Who is it?"

Before he finished asking, someone broke into the room.

He pointed to Lin XianEr, and said while laughing wildly, "Although you pretended to not see me, I did see you. Do you still think you can leave me behind?"

No expression appeared on Lin XianEr's face. She simply said, "Who are you? I don't recognize you!"

This youngster laughed, "You don't recognize me? You really don't recognize me? You mean you forgot that night? That's just great, I spent all that time to send all those letters for you, yet now you don't even know me?"

He suddenly rushed towards Lin XianEr, wanting to grab Lin XianEr, and said, "But I still know you. I will never forget you..."

Lin XianEr obviously won't let herself be seized by this youngster, quickly evading to the side. She yelled in shock, "This person's drunk. He's mad."

He wanted to grab her again, but Ah Fei had already blocked his path. He said loudly, "Get out!"

That youngster said, "Who are you? What right do you have to tell me to leave? You want to please her, don't you. I'll tell you something. One day she's going to forget you too, just like she forgot about me."

He suddenly began to laugh loudly, and said, "Anyone who thinks that she could love him is an idiot, and idiot.. She's been with hundreds of men..."

Before he could finish, Ah Fei's fist shot out!

'Bam', the youngster flew out the window, and landed face

up in the courtyard.

Lin XianEr suddenly covered her face and began to cry. She said with tears, "What did I do wrong? Why would these people wrong me like this? Trying to hurt me so..."

Ah Fei sighed, held her tightly and said, "You don't have to be afraid as long as I'm by your side."

After a long time, Lin XianEr finally stopped crying. She whispered, "Thankfully, you're still by my side. As long as you're by my side, I don't care how anyone else think of me."

Ah Fei, with fire burning in his eyes, said as he bit his teeth, "I won't let anyone hurt you in the future!"

Lin XianEr said, "Anyone?"

Ah Fei said, "That's right. Anyone."

Lin XianEr smiled, and grabbed him even more tightly.

But her eyes are looking at someone else. There's no pain in her eyes, but rather happiness.

That person is also looking back at her.

He stood right by the fallen youngster.

He's very tall, very thin, on his waist is a sword!

Although there's light in the courtyard, it's dim. One could only see three scars on his face.

Of course, the scariest part was his eyes.

His eyes were gray, lacking any feelings, any life.

He stared coldly at Lin XianEr and slowly nodded. Then he turned around and walked away, toward a set of rooms in the south.

After a while, two people came by and took the youngster away.

Lin XianEr finally stopped crying totally.

It's now later in the night.

Ah Fei slept soundly on the bed. He fell asleep right after he drank the tea Lin XianEr gave him.

The courtyard is very quiet, with only sounds of the wind.

Then, the door opened.

She left the room quietly, and made her way through the courtyard, towards the set of rooms in the south.

There's only one room here where the light's still on.

Lin XianEr knocked on that room's door.

A low, coarse voice said from the inside, "The door's unlocked."

Lin XianEr gently pushed the door, and opened it.

That person who stared at her earlier sat in the room, still as a statue.

Lin XianEr saw his eyes clearly as she moved closer.

His pupils were very big, so when he's looking at you, he's seemingly looking elsewhere. But when he's looking elsewhere, he's seemingly looking at you.

These eyes were not bright, nor were they penetrating, but there's some devilish attraction about them. Even Lin XianEr couldn't help but shudder inside as she saw them.

But on the outside, she still smiled innocently.

The scarier the person she meets, the more innocently she smiles. This is her first weapon against men. She had perfected this art.

She said with a smile, "So are you Mr. Jin?"

Jin WuMing stared at her intently. He neither responded nor made any gesture.

Lin XianEr smiled even more sweetly, and said, "I've heard about the famous Mr. Jin for a long time now."

Jin WuMing continued to stare at her coldly. In his eyes, the most beautiful woman in the world looked no different from a block of wood.

Jin WuMing suddenly interrupted her, and said coldly, "You need to remember one rule when speaking with me."

Lin XianEr said, "Just tell me the rule, Mr. Jin. I'll follow it."

Jin WuMing said, "I only ask questions, not answer them. Understand?"

Lin XianEr said, "I understand."

Jin WuMing said, "But if I ask a question, then there must be an answer. A very clear and simple answer, as I don't want to hear any junk."

Lin XianEr said, "I understand."

Jin WuMing asked, "So you are Lin XianEr?"

Lin XianEr said, "Yes."

Jin WuMing asked, "You asked to meet me here?"

Lin XianEr said, "Yes."

Jin WuMing asked, "You already found Li XunHuan for us?"

Lin XianEr said, "Yes."

Jin WuMing asked, "Why are you doing this?"

Lin XianEr said, "I know Clan Leader ShangGuan wants to find Li XunHuan, because Li XunHuan likes to mind other people's businesses too much."

Jin WuMing asked, "You want to help us?"

Lin XianEr said, "Yes."

Jin WuMing's eyes narrowed, and asked loudly, "Why do you want to help us?"

Lin XianEr said, "Because I hate Li XunHuan. I want him to die!"

Jin WuMing asked, "Why don't you kill him yourself?"

Lin XianEr sighed, and said, "Because I can't. I can't even think about it when I'm standing in front of him, because his eyes can see into other's minds. His one dagger can take others' lives."

Jin WuMing asked, "Is his dagger really that powerful?"

Lin XianEr sighed again, and said, "His dagger is even scarier than the legend. Everyone who had wanted to kill him had died in his hands. Other than Mr. Jin and Clan Leader ShangGuan, there's no one on this Earth who can kill him!"

She raised her head and said gently, "Although I've never seen Mr. Jin's sword art, I can imagine its power."

Jin WuMing asked, "How can you imagine such a thing?"

Lin XianEr said, "By your composure and calm. Although I'm not a swordsman, I do know that when experts fight, speed and variations aren't the most important factor in the battle. The most important factor is their composure."

Jin WuMing asked, "Why?"

Lin XianEr said, "Because there really isn't really that much diversity between the different sword moves in the world. Nor is there much difference between the speeds of expert fighters. So the most important issue is who can remain calm during the battle, to see the weakness of the opponent. That is who the winner will be."

Lin XianEr really is amazing.

This is her third weapon against men.

She knows that all men like to be praised, especially praised by women. Praises can be incredibly useful in getting a man's heart.

Jin WuMing still did not show any expression on his face. He asked, "You set the appointment date on the first day of the tenth month?"

Lin XianEr said, "Yes, because I know Mr. Jin and Clan Leader ShangGuan will be there by that date."

Jin WuMing said, "But how can you be sure that Li XunHuan will also be there?"

Lin XianEr said, "Because I know he has seen the letter. If he saw the letter, then he'll be there."

Jin WuMing said, "You are certain?"

Lin XianEr said, "He's not afraid of death, because he can't live for much longer anyway."

Her smile disappeared, and added, "But because he's about to die, Li XunHuan's very dangerous. Although your kung fu might be better, you still have to watch out. He might fight as if he doesn't care for his life."

Her gaze was filled with much compassion, her fourth weapon against men.

If a beautiful woman can use these four weapons well, then she can make at least ninety-nine percent of men grovel at her feet.

Unfortunately, this man proved to be an exception to the rule. Because not only is he not a man, he's not even human!

But thankfully, she has her most useful weapon left.

This is her last one, and the most primitive one which women have. Sometimes this weapon is the only way to control a man.

But would it work on Jin WuMing?"

Lin XianEr hesitated.

Unless she's absolutely certain, she would never use this weapon.

Jin WuMing said calmly, "Are you done speaking?"

Lin XianEr said, "Yes."

Jin WuMing slowly got up, walked to the side of the table, his face away from her.

Lin XianEr let out a bitter smile, and said, "If Mr. Jin has no further orders, I shall leave now."

Jin WuMing ignored her. He took out a pill, and swallowed it with a cup of tea.

Lin XianEr doesn't see what else she can do here. She can only leave.

But before she reached the door, Jin WuMing suddenly said, "You like to seduce men, don't you."

Lin XianEr froze. Jin WuMing added, "You've been trying to seduce me ever since you came to this room, right?"

Lin XianEr's eyes brightened. She said with her head lowered, "I like men who have a lot of self control."

Jin WuMing turned around and said, "Then why did you give up?"

Her cheeks fully flushed. Lin XianEr said, "Your heart seemed to be made of steel. I... I can't..."

Jin WuMing said, "But my body's not made of steel."

He added, "If you want to seduce me, there's only one method, the most direct method."

Lin XianEr said with her face all red, "Why don't you teach me that method?"

Jin WuMing slowly walked up to her, and said in a chilling voice, "You actually need me to teach you this method?"

He raised his hand and slapped her on the face.

Lin XianEr's body flew up, and landed on the bed. While her body still suffered from the pain afflicted by the slap, fire of desire burnt in her eyes.

By the time Lin XianEr walked out of the room, it's nearly dawn.

She looked very flustered, very tired, and her legs were so weak she almost couldn't walk. But her heart felt very fulfilled, very calm.

Every time she lit up the fire in Ah Fei's heart, she'd also have a fire burnt within her own heart. That's why she must find someone to release this desire, to put out the fire.

She liked to be tortured, and liked to torture others.

Lin XianEr looked up into the sky and said, "Today's already the twenty-fifth. Five more days... Only five more days..."

She smiled.

Oh, Li XunHuan. You only have five more days to live!

Chapter 43: Life and Death

Li XunHuan carved on the wood. The girl in the red dress kept staring at him. Suddenly, she asked, "What are you carving?"

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "You can't tell?"

The little girl said, "It looks like a carving of a person, but why won't you finish the carving each time? If you did, then I would be able to see how pretty this person is."

Li XunHuan's smile disappeared, and began to cough.

He doesn't want anyone to know whom he was carving, so he never finished any of them. Although he could try carving something else, his hand never obeyed. Even if he started off carving something else, it would eventually become her.

Because he just can't forget her.

It's getting dark.

Li XunHuan slowly raised his hand, the dagger in his hand sparkled, but the sparkles kept moving.

"Is my hand shaking?"

Li XunHuan's heart sank, because he dreaded this day, the day when his hand would shake even when he had not drunk. How could this hand release his deadly dagger?

He gripped the dagger tighter, so tightly his fingers turned white.

He then slowly loosened his grip, and looked out the window. He asked, "What day is today?"

The little girl said, "It's the thirtieth of the ninth month. Tomorrow would be the first."

Li XunHuan closed his eyes, and asked, "Where's Mr. Guo?"

The little girl said, "He said he would take a stroll in the streets."

Li XunHuan looked at the tip of his dagger, suddenly he struck it down onto the carving.

He carved very fast, and the wood almost turned into a human carving, those big eyes, that straight nose, still looked so young.

But what about the person? The person's already old.

When a person lived in the midst of sadness, she tends to age very fast.

Li XunHuan stared aimlessly at this carving, not wanting to look away, because he knew that he would never see her again.

Suddenly a voice said, "This person's carving is so pretty.

Who is she? Your lover?"

The little girl came back to him. She carried a basket in her hand.

Li XunHuan forced a smile and said, "I don't know who she is either. Perhaps she's just a goddess in Heaven..."

The little girl blinked her eyes and shook her head. She said, "You're lying. The goddesses in Heaven are all happy, but she looks so sad..."

Li XunHuan said, "If there are happy people here on Earth, why can't there be sad goddesses in Heaven?"

The little girl said, "Yet you're not happy at all, because you love her, yet can't have her, right?"

Li XunHuan's complexion changed, his heart sank.

The little girl said, "You can tell me what happened. I already know that I am right upon seeing your reaction."

Li XunHuan said, "It's an old, old story."

The little girl said, "If it happened so long ago, why can't you still not forget her?"

Li XunHuan thought for a long time before answering, "Once you get to my age, you'll realize that the person you want to forget the most, is the person you can never forget..."

The little girl nodded, tried to absorb what Li XunHuan had just said, and then began drifting into her own thoughts. She even forgot to put down the basket.

After a long time, she sighed deeply, and said, "Everyone else said that you're cold, ruthless, yet you're not like that at all."

Li XunHuan said, "What kind of a person do you think I am?"

The little girl said, "I think you worry too much, care too much, basically a romantic. If you really fell in love with a woman, then that woman must be very lucky."

Li XunHuan said, "Maybe it's because I haven't been drinking. Once I start to drink, I'd fall into a stupor."

The little girl said with a smile, "Then I should really drink wine, because being in a stupor seems like a good idea. At least then I'll have no more worries."

As she said this, she took out a wine bottle from the basket, and drank half the bottle.

Young people tended to drink very fast, because drinking takes a bit of courage.

The little girl's face became flushed as a peach. Suddenly, she stared at Li XunHuan and asked, "I know your name is Li XunHuan, but do you know my name?"

Li XunHuan said, "How could I know if you've never told me?"

The little girl said, "Why should I tell you if you never asked me?"

She bit her lips, and continued, "In addition, you also never asked me what kind of a person I am, why I am here, where's everyone else. You didn't ask anything. Is it because since

you know you're about to die, you stopped caring for everything else?"

Li XunHuan said, "You're drunk. When a little girl becomes drunk, she should go to sleep."

The little girl said, "You don't want to hear? Then I'll force you to listen. I have no father, no mother, so I don't even know my own name. Five years ago, my lady bought me, which is why my surname is now Lin. My lady likes to call me LingLing*, so my name became Lin LingLing..."

*Note: 'Ling' means 'bell'.

She laughed a bit, and continued, "Don't you think that this is such a great name, Lin LingLing? Just like a doorbell, when someone shakes it, it will start to ring. When nobody rings the bell, then it just stays silent, doing nothing."

Li XunHuan sighed, because he realized that this little girl also had a sad past, and wasn't nearly as happy as she looked.

Why can't I ever meet a truly happy person?

LingLing said, "Do you know why I stayed here? It really doesn't matter even if you know. My lady asked me to stay so I can take care of you, to keep giving you wine, to let your hand shake. She says that once your hand starts shaking, you'll soon die."

She stared at Li XunHuan, as if waiting for him to get mad.

But Li XunHuan simply smiled, and said, "Ten years ago, people had begun to say that I would soon die, yet I still lived till today. Pretty strange, don't you think?"

LingLing said, "I just told you that I had been hurting you, yet why aren't you mad at me?"

He sighed deeply and said, "Everyone in this world is someone else's bell at one time or the other. You are someone else's bell, why can't I be one too? That person ringing the bell might also be a bell for yet another person."

LingLing said, "Now I finally know that you're really a kind person. Why would my lady want to kill you?"

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "People who want other people to die would sooner or later die themselves."

LingLing said, "But when some people die, everyone becomes happy. While when others die, everyone would be sad..."

She looked at the floor and added, "If you die, I'll likely shed tears for you."

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "Because we're already friends... at least we've known each other for a few days now."

LingLing shook her head and said, "That doesn't mean anything. I've known that Mr. Guo for much longer than you. But if he dies, I would not shed a single tear for him."

She smiled, and added, "Because if I die, he would not waste a tear on me either."

Li XunHuan said, "Do you think that he's heartless?"

LingLing said, "Of course not. Some people might look cruel

on the outside, but are quite sentimental on the inside. When a person tends to keep his feelings to himself, then the compassion he does show is much more genuine.”

Li XunHuan had been deeply in his thoughts during this time, so deeply that he didn't notice Guo SongYang standing by the door... He really is someone who doesn't show his emotions much.

He still stood there quietly, not a single expression on his face.

The sun rose very early today.

Li XunHuan rose even earlier. He did not sleep much last night.

Before dawn, he had already taken a bath, and then put on the new clothes he bought at the town earlier.

He's neither too fat nor too skinny, so although the robe wasn't nicely tailored, it still fit him perfectly.

Now, faced with the bright sky, he felt very energized.

Because today's a special day.

By tonight, he could very well be dead. But since he had lived a clean life, he felt that he should die a clean death.

The chance of him winning today is very slim, which meant that he's most likely to die. But as long as there's a chance, he would not give up!

He's not afraid of death, but doesn't want to die in a pair of dirty hands.

He tied his hair with a green strip, about to shave.

Suddenly a voice said, “How can you go to an appointment with such disorganized hair? Here, let me brush it for you.”

He wasn’t sure when LingLing had entered the room. Her eyes are red, as if she didn’t sleep much last night, or perhaps because she had secretly cried.”

Li XunHuan smiled and nodded.

Suddenly, a memory of the past appeared in his head.

That day was more than ten years ago, the weather was just like today’s, the chrysanthemum bloomed outside the window. He sat in his room, while a person brushed his hair.

Even now, he still remembered those soft and gentle pair of hands.

He had planned to go on a long trip that day, which was why she brushed very slowly.

As she brushed slowly, she wanted to keep him from going, even for at least for the moment. When she finally finished, a tear fell on his hair.

It was on this trip where he met some powerful enemies, and almost lost his life. Thankfully, Long Xiao4Yun saved him. This was something else he never forgot.

But he forgot that although Long Xiao4Yun saved him at that moment, he ruined the rest of Li XunHuan’s life...

Why would some people only remember the kindness of

others?

Li XunHuan closed his eyes, and said with a bitter smile, "At least I made it back after that trip. Can I come back alive today? Would it have been better had I not returned that day?"

He doesn't want to keep thinking about it, and opened his eyes again. Suddenly, he felt that the hands brushing his hair right now are also soft and gentle.

He turned around, only to see a tear dropping down LingLing's eyes, finally landing on his hair.

The same gentle hands, the same shiny tear.

Li XunHuan felt as if it's that day again, suddenly he grabbed her hands, and said softly, "You're crying?"

LingLing's face turned red, and quick looked away upon meeting his gaze. She bit her teeth and said, "I know your appointment is today, which is why you're all dressed up, right?"

Li XunHuan did not respond, because he realized that these are not the same pair of hands that touched him years ago. The past can never come back.

LingLing continued, "Since you're going to meet your beautiful lady friend, of course I'm sad."

Li XunHuan put down her hands and forced a smile. He said, "You're still a kid. You still don't know what it is to be sad."

LingLing said, "I might not have known before, but I do now. I might not have known yesterday, but I do know today."

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "Do you think you've grown up in one day?"

LingLing said, "Of course. Some people's hairs can all turn white in one day, haven't you heard this?"

Li XunHuan said, "That's because they're too worried about their life and death. What about you?"

LingLing lowered her head and said, "It's because of you... Once you leave today, would you ever come back?"

Li XunHuan thought for a while, and sighed deeply, "You already know whom I'm meeting today?"

LingLing slowly nodded, then tied his hair together with that green strip, and said, "I know you're going no matter what. I know that I can't keep you."

Li XunHuan said gently, "You'll know my reasons once you grow up. Sometimes, you have no choice in certain matters."

He remained silent for a long time, as agony appeared on his face. Finally, he said, "I didn't stay because of her... I've never done anything for her, I..."

He then quickly stood up, and said, "It's getting late. I should go..."

Before he could finish the sentence, Guo SongYang had entered the room. He interrupted loudly, "How could you leave just when I'm coming in?"

He's holding a bottle of wine, the odor of alcohol on his body entered the room even before he did.

Li XunHuan said, "It looks like brother Guo had been drinking last night. Why didn't you tell me?"

Guo SongYang laughed, and said, "Sometimes it's best to just drink in pairs, one more would be too many."

He suddenly lowered his voice, put his hands on Li XunHuan's shoulders, and said, "You know what I like to do when I'm in a bad mood, right?"

Li XunHuan smiled slyly, and said, "So that's what you were..."

Just as he spoke, Guo SongYang's hands sealed seven of his pressure points with lightning quick speed.

Li XunHuan fell down.

LingLing screamed, and hurriedly picked up Li XunHuan. She asked, "What are you doing?"

At this moment, Guo SongYang suddenly looked awake again. His face became cold and distant. Guo SongYang said, "When he wakes up, tell him that it's not often a man gets to duel with ShanGuan JinHong. I don't want to pass up this opportunity!"

LingLing said, "You... you're going with him?"

Guo SongYang said, "I know he won't let me go with him, and I don't want him to go with me either."

Tears came down LingLing's eyes. She said, "He's right. You really are a good person."

Guo SongYang said, "Both in life and death, I would never want anyone to cry for me. It only disgusts me to see a woman's tears. Save yours for someone else!"

He quickly turned around and walked out.

Although Li XunHuan couldn't move or speak, he still could feel his surroundings. As he saw Guo SongYang walk out, tears came down his eyes.

Li XunHuan closed his eyes, his heart ached terribly. He suddenly realized that some relationships are just hard to explain.

He had done many things for many people. Some of them had since ignored him, some forgot about him, some even betrayed him.

But he had never done anything for Guo SongYang, yet Guo SongYang was willing to die for him.

This is true friendship.

This type of friendship could not be bought, or exchanged. Perhaps it's because of this friendship that people can exist in this world.

The light from the window became dimmer.

LingLing locked the door, shut the window, and then sat by Li XunHuan's side. She looked at him silently.

What time is it now?

Had Guo SongYang started battling ShangGuan JinHong and Jin WuMing yet?

He's in the battle for his life, yet I could only calmly lie here, doing nothing.

When he thought about this, Li XunHuan's heart began to break apart.

Suddenly, he heard footsteps outside.

Then, he heard knocks from the front door, "Bang, Bang Bang!"

LingLing tensed up.

Is Guo SongYang already dead? Are they looking for Li XunHuan now?

Bang, Bang Bang!

This time, the knocks got louder.

Cold sweat poured down LingLing's face. She quickly picked up Li XunHuan, and looked around for a place to hide him.

The knocks continued, louder and louder each time. If she doesn't go get the door right away, those people might just knock down the door.

LingLing bit her lips and yelled, "I'm coming, what's the hurry? You have to at least wait until I put on my clothes!"

As she spoke, she kicked open the closet door, and put Li XunHuan inside. Then she covered him with some clothing.

Although Li XunHuan doesn't like to hide, he has no choice in this matter.

Only to see LingLing stared at the mirror on the table, organized her hair and wiped the sweat off her head.

Then she quickly shut the closet door, and put a lock over it.

She said to herself, "I finally get a chance to get in an afternoon nap, and someone knocks on the door. Why do I always get such luck?"

Then Li XunHuan heard the door open.

The door opened, and all sounds stopped. LingLing must've looked shocked, for she had never met the two people standing outside.

They're not ShangGuan JinHong and Jin WuMing!

The visitors did not speak. After a moment, he heard LingLing ask, "Who are you looking for? Or do you just want a place to sleep?"

The visitors still did not speak.

Only to hear a loud thud, as if LingLing was pushed against the door, then two pairs of footsteps could be heard walked in.

Chapter 44: Lucky to Escape from Death

The closet's dark and stuffy. Anyone else in this situation might go crazy from all the tension. The people who came are obviously up to no good, or they wouldn't have pushed LingLing around.

But Li XunHuan only felt serenity.

He smiled in his heart.

He remembered that day he first came here, when LingLing told him that he was a bandit. This girl might not have learned much else, but her lying skills are already on par with Lin XianEr.

Yet these two people didn't even take notice of her. They simply walked around the two outside rooms, as if searching for something. Then they came into the room he's in.

LingLing quickly blocked their way, and yelled, "This is my lady's personal room. How can you barge in here like this?"

A person said, "But we're here to meet your lady."

This voice was very gentle, pleasing to the ears, and contained a smile.

It's a voice of a woman!

Li XunHuan was certainly shocked.

Only to hear LingLing say, "If so, do you actually know her?"

That woman said, "Of course... we're actually good friends."

LingLing said, "If that's so, then why didn't you tell me earlier. I thought you were bandits."

That woman chuckled, and said, "Do we really look like we're bandits?"

LingLing said, "I don't know about you two, but bandits these days are different from the past. Some of them are even more mannerly and more dashing than you two. No one can tell who they are from appearance now."

Before that woman could respond, another voice said, "Where's your lady? Can you ask her to come out?"

This voice was low, and a little coarse, but also pleasing to the ears. Li XunHuan thought this voice seemed familiar, but couldn't remember at this moment.

LingLing said, "I'm terribly sorry, but my lady left here a few days ago, leaving just me to look after the house. I'll be happy to take a message."

That woman said, "When will she come back?"

LingLing said, "I don't know... If she doesn't tell me, I do not dare ask."

The other woman suddenly let out a snicker, and said, "How

convenient. She's here everyday except for the day we come. Is she hiding from us?"

These words proved that they're here to cause trouble.

LingLing still smiled, and said, "If you two are my lady's friends, then she would love to see you again. Why would she hide?"

That woman said with a smile, "Some people would see anyone, except her friends. Don't you think this odd?"

The other woman said coldly, "Maybe it's because she did too many terrible things to her friends.

LingLing said with a smile, "You two really say some strange things. This is a pretty small place. Even if she wants to hide, there really is no place."

That woman said, "Really? Although I'm not familiar with this house, I just might be able to find secret room to hide in."

LingLing said, "Well, maybe if you can hide that closet over there."

She laughed, and added, "But if someone really did hide in this closet, she'd likely suffocate to death."

That woman also laughed, and said, "You're right. Your lady is very mindful of her comfort. She'd never be able to stand staying in that closet..."

Both woman laughed, and very slyly at that.

After a long time, that woman added, "If your lady's not in

this closet, then who is in there right now?”

LingLing said, “What? There’s someone in the closet? How come even I don’t know about it?”

That woman said, “If there’s no one in the closet, then why are you blocking it? Are you afraid that I might see your lady’s dresses?”

LingLing said, “What are you talking about? I’m not blocking anything...”

That woman said, “Little sister, you really do know how to talk, but you’re simply too young. You’re still not old enough to fool old foxes like us.”

A person hiding inside someone else’s closet is nothing to be proud of. He really doesn’t know how these two ladies would react upon seeing him.

He also doesn’t know who they are.

The first woman’s voice is soft and gentle, but her words pierce like needles. Needless to say, she’s very difficult to deal with.

The other woman might not talk much, but she seemed to be looking for trouble with her few words. She likely has some resentment against Lin XianEr.

Both of their martial arts are at least on par with Lin XianEr’s.

Only to hear LingLing let out a gasp, the closet door opened.

Li XunHuan closed his eyes, and hoped that the two ladies

would not recognize him.

That woman also could not believe that there's a man in the closet, and froze.

After a while, she said with a smile, "Little sister, who is this person? Is he asleep?"

LingLing said, "He'... he's my cousin."

That woman laughed, and said, "Oh, how delightful! You know, when I was young, I also hid a lot of lovers in my closet. One time someone found out, and I said he was my cousin too."

That woman added, "This little girl really is something. Even we aren't as skillful as she is."

The other woman remained silent for a long time, and then said, "Since Lin XianEr's not here, why don't we leave."

That woman said, "What's the hurry? Since we're already here, why don't we stay for a while?"

When the closet door opened, Li XunHuan smelled an attractive fragrance. Now that smell's even thicker, meaning that woman must be very close to him.

After a while, that woman said, "Little sister. You might be young, but you certainly have great vision when it comes to choosing men."

LingLing said, "There aren't many men here, and my lady took all the good ones. So I had to settle for him."

That woman said, "You mean you're not satisfied with him?"

Look at him, he's neither skinny nor fat, his face looks pretty nice, and he seems quite experienced when it comes to women."

LingLing said, "He's fairly ok in other regards, but his flaw is that he sleeps too much."

That woman said with a smile, "Maybe it's because he's too tired... After all, how could he not be after meeting a little devil like you?"

LingLing said, "He's also a bit too old."

That woman said, "You're right. He is a little old for you, but perfect for me."

She then added, "If you don't like him, little sister, you can give him to me. I promise I'll get you a younger man in a couple of days."

This woman seemed quite mannerly before, but changed dramatically after seeing him. Even as she spoke, she picked up Li XunHuan.

In this situation, Li XunHuan has to open his eyes.

When he did so, he was in for a huge shock.

This woman isn't old, probably around twenty-five to twenty-six. Nor is she bad looking. Actually, if one would split her into three parts, you'd have three beautiful women.

The only problem is that she also has three chins. Cradled in her bosom, Li XunHuan felt like sleeping on a pile of cotton.

He could hardly believe that the woman with such a

charming laughter and a sweet voice would be so obese.

But even more shocking was the identity of the other woman.

This woman is also beautiful. Her waist is very thin, wearing a fitting blue robe. Her sleeves are very big. Even while simply standing, she had a goddess-like aura.

She is none other than the person Li XunHuan broke the wrist of, Blue Scorpion!

But what's odd is that Blue Scorpion doesn't seem to recognize him. Her face looked very calm. She didn't even look at him much.

That fat woman kept on laughing, each laugh shook Li XunHuan like an earthquake.

LingLing began to fluster, said, "This person's very dirty. He usually goes months between baths. You really shouldn't touch him, or you might get fleas.

That fat woman said, "Dirty? Surely not. Besides, it doesn't matter even if he has fleas. It only makes him seem more manly."

LingLing said, "But... in addition, he's even a drunkard."

That fat woman said, "That's even better. A man's not true man unless he can drink."

She winked at Li XunHuan, and whispered to him, "You'll soon know just how great I can be."

LingLing began to laugh again, and laughing extremely

hard.

That fat woman widened her eyes and asked, “What are you laughing about?”

LingLing said, “I’m just laughing at your stupidity. I can’t believe you’d dare to touch him.”

That fat woman said, “What’s so special about him?”

LingLing said, “Do you know who he is?”

That fat woman said, “Do you know who I am?”

LingLing said, “Surely you’re not his cousin.”

That fat woman said, “Have you heard the name Happy Lady Buddha? I’m her disciple Zhi ZunBao. I specialize in eating men.”

LingLing said, “If you dare to eat him, he just might get stuck in your throat, and you can’t even cough him back out.”

Zhi ZunBao said, “But I never cough out bones when I eat men.”

LingLing blinked her eyes, and said, “Do you really not want to know who he is?”

Zhi ZunBao said, “If I wanted to, I’d simply ask him. You don’t have to worry about this. Besides.. as long as he’s a man, I’d be satisfied.”

She turned around towards Blue Scorpion and smiled, said, “Help me out here and get rid of this girl. This is a nice

place, and I want to borrow it for a while. Don't peek."

Li XunHuan lost all senses in his body. He wanted to throw up, but couldn't. He wanted to die, but couldn't. His last hope is for Blue Scorpion to seek her revenge right now, and give him a quick death."

Yet how could Blue Scorpion act as if she's never seen him? She just stood there, not even giving him a peek. But at this moment, she suddenly said, "I want this man too."

Zhi ZunBao's face sunk, and asked loudly, "What? What did you say?"

Blue Scorpion kept her solemn expression, and said, "I said I want this man too!"

Zhi ZunBao stared at her with eyes filled with murderous rage. She said loudly, "You dare to take him away from me?"

Blue Scorpion said, "Yes."

Zhi ZunBao's face turned green, and then pale. She then smiled, and said, "If you really do want him, then we can certainly discuss this."

Blue Scorpion said, "I don't want his body, I want his life!"

Zhi ZunBao said with a smile, "Then this is much easier to discuss. Once I have his body, then you can take his life."

Blue Scorpion said, "After I take his life, then you can have his body."

Although she's angry, Zhi ZunBao forced a smile and said, "I do like men a lot, but not dead men."

Blue Scorpion said, "But he seemingly doesn't seem to be much different from a dead person right now."

Zhi ZunBao said, "The reason he can't move is because someone sealed his pressure points. I obviously have a way to make him move again."

Blue Scorpion said, "Once he can move, then I'll no longer be able to take his life."

LingLing said with a smile, "That's true. Once he can move, all he needs to do is move his hand, and you'll both be dead!"

Zhi ZunBao asked, "Who is he?"

LingLing said, "He's 'Little Li's Flying Dagger'."

Zhi ZunBao froze. She shook her head and said, "I don't believe you. If he really is Li XunHuan, then why would he love you?"

LingLing said, "He doesn't. It's me who love him. That's why I want you to kill him."

Zhi ZunBao asked, "Why?"

LingLing said, "My lady told me, if I ever fall in love with someone, and he doesn't love me back, then it's better for me that he die, rather than to be with another woman."

Zhi ZunBao sighed, and said, "I can't believe you're even more venomous than I am."

LingLing said, "So do you still want his body? You still dare to?"

Zhi ZunBao did not waver, and said, "If I could have a one night stand with a man like Li XunHuan, I would die happily."

She then turned to Blue Scorpion and added, "Don't worry, I guarantee that you can take still take his life even after I get his body."

Blue Scorpion did not respond.

Zhi ZunBao said, "Don't forget. I originally came here so I could help you out. You really should give me some face."

Blue Scorpion paused a moment before saying, "Will you still be interested in a man with a hand chopped off?"

Zhi ZunBao said, "A missing hand is nothing, as long as certain others parts are still there."

Blue Scorpion said, "Then I want one of his hands!"

Zhi ZunBao thought for a while and said, "Which hand?"

Blue Scorpion said, "He broke my right hand, so I want his right one."

Zhi ZunBao sighed, and said, "Fine then. Go ahead. Just don't make a big mess."

Blue Scorpion said, "Good enough."

She slowly walked towards them, her eyes shined.

LingLing yelled, "You really aren't afraid of him?"

Zhi ZunBao said tenderly, "Little sister, do you not want him

to suffer?”

She did not finish her words.

A blue streak of light shot out from Blue Scorpion’s sleeve, aimed towards Li XunHuan’s right wrist.

Only to hear a loud scream, which then stopped.

Li XunHuan’s body dropped to the ground with a loud thud.

No one could’ve thought that the scream came from Zhi ZunBao.

During her scream, she dropped Li XunHuan, and turned to attack Blue Scorpion.

Blue Scorpion twisted her waist and moved out of the way.

Yet despite a waist thicker than a water tub, Zhi ZunBao had amazing flexibility. She quickly changed directions and caught Blue Scorpion’s hand.

Blue Scorpion’s face turned pure white.

Zhi ZunBao’s face turned green, her expression as ugly as can be. She said while biting her teeth, “You... you have the nerve to attack me? I will kill you!”

With a loud cracking sound, she pulled off Blue Scorpion’s hand along with her sleeve.

Blue Scorpion retreated a few more steps, and oddly showed no expression of pain.

Zhi ZunBao tore off her right hand.

Blue Scorpion began to laugh. She said, "Want to see what you're holding in your hand?"

Zhi ZunBao picked up the hand, and saw a small scorpion tail on the wrist of the hand, hidden behind those huge sleeves.

Blue Scorpion said, "No one can walk more than seven steps after being poisoned by my scorpion tail. You are much bigger than most people, so the poison would not spread so quickly in you. But I seriously doubt you can walk more than three steps.

Zhi ZunBao screamed, and tried to attack her.

After three steps, she really did fell to the floor.

Blue Scorpion didn't even look at her, instead turned toward Li XunHuan. She looked at him with a blank face for a while, then said, "Yi Ku died because he went to see Lin XianEr. I originally came here to settle up with her. This has nothing to do with you."

LingLing cut in, "If you want him to speak, why don't you unseal his pressure points?"

Blue Scorpion ignored her and continued, "Although you made my right hand useless, at least you spared my life. I always return my favors. That's why I can't stand to watch you get mutilated by that pig."

Li XunHuan sighed in his heart. He never knew Blue Scorpion was this type of a person.

Blue Scorpion said coldly, "Now that I've repaid your favor,

it's time for me to collect what's rightfully mine. I don't think it would be excessive for me to ask for your right hand, right?"

Li XunHuan suddenly smiled, and slowly raised his right hand.

Blue Scorpion froze, so did LingLing.

Li XunHuan's arm could move, but his Little Li's Flying Dagger did not appear!

Watching this hand, how could Blue Scorpion speak?

Li XunHuan smiled bitterly and said, "I was attempting to unseal my pressure points through inner power. Unfortunately my ability's not good enough to pass the last hurdle. Who'd have thought that drop to the ground helped me break through, allowing me to move again."

LingLing said, "Then why are you so obedient? Why did you hold out your hand when she asked for it? You could've given her the dagger."

Li XunHuan's face sunk, ignored her, and said to Blue Scorpion, "Miss Blue, your request is indeed not excessive. Go ahead."

Blue Scorpion thought for a long time, and then sighed. She said, "There is actually someone like this in the world..."

She repeated this sentence again. Then she quickly turned around, and began to walk out the door.

But just at this moment, Li XunHuan somehow jumped out, blocked her path, and said, "Please wait a moment."

Chapter 45: Near Miss

Blue Scorpion laughed and said, "What's the need? You have returned my debt the moment you raised your hand. Although I'm a woman, I still have my morals."

LingLing blinked her eyes and cut in, "But women don't have to be moral. It's within our rights. Because men are naturally stronger than women, they have to give in a bit to us."

Blue Scorpion said, "Who said this?"

LingLing said, "My lady."

Blue Scorpion said, "You listen to her a lot?"

LingLing said, "Of course, because she speaks up for women."

Blue Scorpion suddenly walked over to her, and slapped on her cheeks ten times.

LingLing froze.

Blue Scorpion said coldly, "Like you two, I'm also not a good person. But I still have to hit you, to teach you a lesson. Do you know what that is?"

LingLing bit her teeth and said, "Because you're a... you're

a..."

Before she could finish, she began to cry.

Blue Scorpion said, "Because of women like you, men have always looked down upon us. Because they look down at us, I've always sought revenge, to have done those things I did."

Her voice became softer and softer, "But I did not know that when I was doing those things, I was not only destroying others, but also myself. This is how my life became destroyed."

Li XunHuan said caringly, "Let the past go away. You're still young. You can start over."

Blue Scorpion sighed, and said, "Perhaps you can think this way, but what of others?"

Li XunHuan said, "As long as your heart is content, why should you worry about how others feel? You should live for yourself, not others."

Blue Scorpion looked at him, and asked slowly, "Are you living for yourself?"

Li XunHuan said, "I..."

Blue Scorpion still stared at him, a smile appeared on the side of her mouth. She said, "No one would ever regret meeting someone like you. It's a shame we did not meet ten years ago..."

Then she left.

Only to hear her voice from afar, “Just leave Zhi ZunBao’s body. I will take care of it. Don’t worry, No one else ever have to worry about anything I do.” She was long gone by the time she finished this sentence.

LingLing had been crying all this time, but now she raised her head, and said, “She’s the one who made the mistakes, yet she had to take out her frustrations on me. Although she’s a bad person, she still wants to act all heroic and brave. I absolutely abhor people like her.”

Li XunHuan sighed, and said, “Actually, she’s not like that at all.”

LingLing said, “You think I don’t know the things she had done?”

Li XunHuan said, “No matter what she has done, she is still a kind person at heart. As long as her heart is kind, then she’s not evil.”

LingLing bit her lips and said, “You must think that I’m innately evil, right?”

Li XunHuan said with a smile, “You’re still a child. How could you at your age clearly differentiate between good and bad, right and wrong? As long as someone can teach you the right ways from now on, you’ll turn out fine.”

LingLing blinked her eyes and asked, “So can you teach me?”

Li XunHuan said, “Later, if I ever get the chance..”

LingLing said, “Later? What’s wrong with now?”

Li XunHuan said, "You know I have to go look for Guo SongYang right now. If I can make it back alive..."

LingLing cut him off, "Actually, I know that once you leave here, you'll never return. I'm just a kid. Why would a person like you care about a little girl like me?"

She rubbed her eyes and continued, "Besides, we're strangers really. Even if I become bad, you still won't have to worry about me. Even if I become ten times worse than Blue Scorpion, it's still none of your business. Even if I die on the street, you still won't bother to give me a burial."

As she spoke, her voice became sadder and sadder, as if should she turn out bad, the culprit would be Li XunHuan.

Li XunHuan could only laugh bitterly. He said, "I promise I'll return..."

LingLing covered her eyes and said, "But you're so busy. By the time you decide to actually come back, I might be long dead."

Li XunHuan said, "I'll be back very soon..."

Before he could finish this sentence, LingLing stopped crying, said, "Really? When? I'll wait for you."

Li XunHuan said, "As long as I am alive, I'll come back immediately after I see Guo SongYang."

LingLing jumped up and smiled. She said, "You really are a good person. For you, I'll become a good person too. But no matter what, you can't lie to me. If you do, I might become bad again."

Li XunHuan's burden was already heavy enough. It only became heavier.

Making sure LingLing turn out good apparently became his obligation. He can't possibly reject it now. Even he wasn't sure just how this problem dropped into his lap.

He could only laugh bitterly.

He had faced way too many problems in his life.

But there's only one thing on his mind right now!

He can only hope that Guo SongYang had not yet met ShangGuan JinHong and Jin WuMing.

He can only hope that he's not too late.

He's not terribly late.

* * *

The autumn sun still had not descended below the mountain. The water glittered like gold under the sunlight.

A piece of maple leaf floated in the golden-colored water, down the river, followed by a second one, and a third... until the river is filled with them.

It's still Autumn. Maple leaves should not be falling yet.

Could these have come from sword streams of Jin WuMing and Guo SongYang?

Li XunHuan's heart sank, because the battle had begun!

This must be an amazingly intense, heart-wrenching duel.

Guo SongYang must be in the fight of his life, which is why these leaves have been so devastated by sword streams.

How much longer can he last?

Li XunHuan can't wait to get there.

About sixty percent of the leaves in the forest have fallen. The atmosphere full of death, the falling leaves danced in the autumn wind, as if filling the sky with blood.

Is the battle over?

Who won?

There are no shadows within the forest. Even if the autumn wind could speak, it could not tell what Li XunHuan wanted to know. Only the flowing water cried out, as if mourning for the vanquished.

If Guo SongYang lost, then where is his body?

The leaves continued to flow down the river.

The Sun finally descended behind the mountain. He suddenly saw a streak of red flowing down the river.

Could it be the blood of the defeated?

Li XunHuan raised his head, headed towards the end of the river, only to see a geyser blowing out water from the side of a mountain.

By this geyser is a single person.

Even though the geyser continuously spurted out water onto this person, it still could not dislodge him from his place.

This person wore a black robe, laid there motionless.

Li XunHuan gasped, “Guo SongYang... Brother Guo...”

He flew towards the body, only to find water spraying all over his eyes.

He jumped into the geyser, and grabbed that person’s hand.

He’s right. This person is indeed Guo SongYang.

His body is now nearly frozen from the cold water, but he still held on to his sword, not letting go even in death.

That sword is the world famous Solar-Apex Iron Sword, its sheath had fallen into the river below, but the sword remained in the mountainside.

Why did he do this?

Li XunHuan moved the body to the ground nearby, only to hear someone yell from behind, “Why did he do this to himself?”

He didn’t have to turn around to know that it was LingLing speaking. This girl, amazingly enough, actually followed him.

LingLing asked, “Why did he hang himself like that? Was he afraid that you couldn’t find him? Did he want to give himself a shower?”

Li XunHuan sighed, said, "If a person comes into the world cleanly, why should he not depart the same way?"

LingLing asked, "What do you mean?"

Li XunHuan said, "He didn't want anyone to bury him, nor to take his body away."

LingLing said, "Why? Was he waiting for you?"

Li XunHuan said, "Exactly."

LingLing asked, "Why wait for you when he's already dead?"

Li XunHuan said, "Because he has something to tell me."

LingLing froze. After a while, she said, "Did you... you say that he wants to tell you something?"

Li XunHuan said, "Correct."

LingLing asked, "You mean you know what he wants to tell you?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

LingLing asked, "He already told you?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

LingLing said, "But... but when you arrived, he's already dead."

Chapter 46: The Heroic and the Ambitious

Li XunHuan looked at Guo SongYang's body, sighed, and said, "You're right. I was a step too late."

LingLing said, "If he's already dead, then what can he tell you? ...Are you saying that dead people can talk too?"

Li XunHuan said, "Even though his message was not expressed in words, I can still hear him."

LingLing said, "But.. but I can't hear anything."

She's totally lost, and became scared.

People tend to be scared of things they don't understand.

Li XunHuan paused for a moment, then said, "You want to know what he said?"

LingLing nodded.

Li XunHuan said, "Actually he had given you the message too. It's just that you weren't listening. To be honest, the words of dead people tend to be the most precious ones, because these are words they used their lives to obtain. If you can learn to hear dead people's words, you can learn a lot of things."

LingLing asked, "But how do I listen to dead people?"

Li XunHuan said, "Obviously, it's not easy to understand the words of a dead person. But if you want to live a few years longer, and live happily, you should learn."

His tone was very serious, with no hints of joking.

LingLing said, "But how do I learn? Will you teach me?"

Li XunHuan said, "Why don't you listen more closely?"

LingLing closed her eyes.

She tried her best to listen, but could not hear anything.

Li XunHuan said, "You should not only use your ears to listen, but also your eyes."

LingLing opened her eyes.

Only to see Guo SongYang's clothing filled with sword wounds, very apparent after being cleansed by water.

His body is now gray, because all blood had left his body.

After a long time, Li XunHuan asked, "So what did you see, what have you heard?"

LingLing said, "I... I see that there are many wounds on his body, nineteen total."

Li XunHuan asked, "What else?"

LingLing said, "Because his wounds are all very short, and

very shallow, one can see that they're made by the tip of a sharp sword."

Li XunHuan asked, "Why must it be a sword?"

LingLing said, "Neither saber nor spear can make such delicate wounds with their tips."

Li XunHuan said, "Very good. You've learnt a lot already."

LingLing smiled, said, "Therefore, the person who killed him must be Jin WuMing, because ShangGuan JinHong uses Dragon & Phoenix Rings, not sword. ShangGuan JinHong perhaps didn't even come."

Li XunHuan said, "Perhaps he was here, but did not attack."

LingLing nodded, said, "These wounds are all made diagonally, deeper on the bottom end, shallower on the top end."

Li XunHuan said, "That's correct."

LingLing said, "Therefore, we can see that each sword stroke struck upward. This is indeed a strange style of sword art. I've often heard that Jin WuMing's sword art is swift and tricky, a very rare style in the martial world. I finally believed this today."

Li XunHuan said, "You're right. Not only is his sword art very mysterious, his strikes all come from awkward angles, so that his opponents could never tell where he was attacking from."

He pointed at one of the wounds on Guo SongYang's body, said, "Look at this wound. It would have been ordinary had

this attack came downward, but based on his wound, you can see that this strike came upward. His sword art is therefore the opposite of traditional sword moves.”

LingLing said, “You’re right.”

Li XunHuan said, “Therefore, Jin WuMing’s strikes all started from below the waist, utilizing much wrist power. If I hadn’t seen these wounds, I would’ve never expected anyone to attack in this manner.”

LingLing nodded.

Li XunHuan said, “You only saw his front side. There are seven more wounds on his back. Considering Guo SongYang’s martial arts, there is no way he should’ve been wounded from behind.”

LingLing said, “That’s right. If I were to fight someone, I would never turn my back to him.”

Li XunHuan said, “Therefore, these wounds must have been made when they passed by each other. Only if Jin WuMing struck from his flank could he have wounded his opponent.”

He sighed, and continued, “Anyone who can attack from the flank practices a very unusual type of sword art. What’s even more extraordinary is, these attacks also were struck upward, which meant that Jin WuMing must’ve changed the way he held his sword at the moment their body passed each other. This ability alone makes him an incredibly dangerous fighter!”

LingLing listened in a daze.

After a long time, she sighed, and said, “So that’s what he

wanted to tell you.”

Li XunHuan said, “Otherwise, there was no way he could’ve suffered so many wounds.”

LingLing asked, “Why?”

Li XunHuan said, “When top fighters fight, winning and losing almost always come down to a single exchange. For if one side showed even the slightest flaw in his move, his opponent would immediately take advantage of it.”

LingLing said, “I understand.”

Li XunHuan said, “Think about it. Solar-Apex Iron Sword has been renowned in the martial world for twenty years now. Guo SongYang is the top one or two sword user in the world. There’s absolutely no way he could’ve revealed twenty-six flaws, and be wounded twenty-six times.”

LingLing said, “You mean he purposely revealed them... but is he not afraid that Jin WuMing would kill him?”

Li XunHuan said, “But because he purposely revealed these flaws, he was able to dodge the killing blow each time. It’s also why his wounds are so superficial.”

LingLing became totally lost. She asked, “Why would he do this?”

Li XunHuan sighed, said, “He did this to tell me exactly what Jin WuMing’s sword art is like!”

LingLing froze.

After a while, tears came down her eyes. She said, “I’ve

always thought that there are no kind people in this world, that friendship simply meant using each other for one's own benefit. That's why if someone wants to live well, one must learn to use others, trick others. Never should one be honorable or caring, or would suffer greatly."

Li XunHuan said, "I take it these ideals are taught to you by Lin XianEr."

LingLing nodded, said, "But now I know that there are good people in this world. There really are people who value honor and friendship above their own lives."

She suddenly kneeled in front of Guo SongYang and said, "Mr. Guo, although you died, you managed to help out your friend, and taught me a valuable lesson in life. Hopefully, you can rest peacefully now."

* * *

On a dirt road outside the mountain, two people walked. The setting sun shined on their robes, which gave off a mysterious, golden glitter.

They did not walk very fast nor very slow, but quite serenely. They did not speak, nor made any irregular gestures.

But their body gave off an invisible aura of murder. Before they even entered the forest, all the birds inside the forest had flown away, scared off by this dark aura.

Life is very important to them.

They would not let any form of life lie on top of their heads!

It's very dim inside the forest.

When they got here, the person walking in the front suddenly stopped. At almost the exact moment, the person behind him also stopped.

The person in the front is ShangGuan JinHong. He asked, "How was Guo SongYang's sword art?"

Jin WuMing said, "Good!"

ShangGuan JinHong asked, "Very good?"

Jin WuMing said, "Very good, better than the leaders of the seven major sword sects."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "But when he fought you, he revealed over twenty-six flaws in his movements."

Jin WuMing said, "Twenty-nine. I did not attack the other three times."

ShangGuan JinHong nodded, said, "You're right. You did not attack those three times. Why?"

Jin WuMing said, "Because had I attacked at those three moments, I would've killed him!"

ShangGuan JinHong said, "You saw that he revealed those flaws on purpose?"

Jin WuMing said, "Correct, which is why I didn't want him to die so quickly. I wanted to use him to practice my sword!"

ShangGuan JinHong said, "But do you know why he revealed all those weaknesses?"

Jin WuMing said, "No. I never thought about that."

Other than killing people, he does not like to think about anything else.

ShangGuan JinHong said, "He revealed those flaws so you could wound him."

Jin WuMing said, "Huh?"

ShangGuan JinHong said, "He knew that he could not defeat us, which is why he did this, so Li XunHuan could see the location of your strikes from his wounds."

He raised his head, and continued, "Therefore, he must've known that Li XunHuan would follow him. If we return right now, we would surely find Li XunHuan there!"

* * *

Li XunHuan went to Ah Fei's house to find a shovel, so he could make a grave. Most people in the martial world tends be buried at the place where they died.

LingLing looked on this whole time. Li XunHuan didn't want her to interfere. Digging this grave is his prerogative. No one else should get in the way.

At this moment LingLing said, "Are you really going to bury him here?"

Li XunHuan nodded.

LingLing said, "If a man dies an honorable death, then it really doesn't matter where he's buried, right?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

LingLing said, "In that case, you should not bury him here."

Li XunHuan said, "If not here, then where?"

LingLing said, "You should hang him at the geyser over there."

Li XunHuan did not respond.

LingLing said, "ShangGuan JinHong and Jin WuMing would surely realize Mr. Guo's intentions after a while, right?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

LingLing said, "Jin WuMing obviously would not want you to know his sword art. So once he realize this, he'll come back, right?"

Li XunHuan said, "Right."

LingLing said, "If they found Mr. Guo's body in a different place upon returning, they'd know that you've been here, right?"

Li XunHuan nodded.

LingLing said, "In that case, should you ever come into blows with them, Jin WuMing would change his sword style, right?"

Li XunHuan said, "Correct."

LingLing said, "If that's the case, then wouldn't Mr. Guo's message be useless?"

Li XunHuan said, "I've already thought about the things you've said."

LingLing said, "Then why do you still intend on burying him here?"

Li XunHuan said, "I can't do that, because he died for me, while I..."

LingLing said, "Exactly because he died for you, you should return him to where you found him. Otherwise, wouldn't his death be in vain?"

Li XunHuan thought for a long time, before he said, "I'd bet anything that ShangGuan JinHong and Jin WuMing would not return!"

* * *

Jin WuMing turned around.

ShangGuan JinHong said, "You want to return?"

Jin WuMing said, "Yes."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "I know you've long wanted to duel with Little Li's Flying Dagger, but now is not the time!"

Jin WuMing asked, "Why?"

ShangGuan JinHong said, "If you return now, you will certainly lose!"

Jin WuMing's hand gripped his sword tightly, his voice turned a bit coarse, asked, "Why would I certainly lose?"

ShangGuan JinHong said, "You've already killed Guo SongYang. Your killer instinct has dissipated. Li XunHuan currently has extra strength from his sadness. If you return now, you're going to be at a severe disadvantage."

Jin WuMing said, "But you..."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Together, we can surely kill him. But... how can you be so sure that Li XunHuan went alone? What if Old Man Sun is with him?"

Jin WuMing said, "Even together, it's not certain that..."

ShangGuan JinHong cut him off, and said clearly, "I've already told you. During our visit to the martial world this time, we can only win, not lose. If we're not a hundred and twenty percent certain of victory, then we will not engage the enemy!"

Jin WuMing remained silent.

ShangGuan JinHong, "Besides, sentimentality has crept into your mind."

Jin WuMing said, "Sentiment?"

ShangGuan JinHong said, "The reason you can win is because you are utterly ruthless, but now that you're a bit sentimental, your strength has decreased."

ShangGuan JinHong then said, "You've never been sentimental before, what happened? Who did this to you?"

Jin WuMing suddenly turned away, and said, "No one."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "I don't really want to ask who this

person is. But if you want to win, want to defeat Li XunHuan, then you must return to your previous level of ruthlessness. If you want to return to that level, then you must kill the woman that moved your heart!”

As he spoke, he turned around and entered the forest.

* * *

It's the middle of the night.

Li XunHuan's heart is just as heavy as his footsteps.

Guo SongYang's finally buried. This famous swordsman's final fate did not differ from anyone else, occupying just a small part of the ground.

But did he die a more important death than most other people?

Li XunHuan did not know the answer. He only knew that Guo SongYang did not have to die. If a person who did not have to die... died, then wasn't his death a bit crazy?

Perhaps all heroes throughout history had been somewhat crazy.

Even he himself is quite crazy.

LingLing followed him closely, suddenly asked, “How do you know ShangGuan JinHong and the others won't be back?”

Li XunHuan said, “Because ShangGuan JinHong is incredibly ambitious. Ambitious people do not act like normal people.”

LingLing asked, “What's so different about them?”

Li XunHuan said, "If they attack, no matter success or failure, they'd retreat safely afterwards, then wait for the next chance to attack. Ambitious people never do things that's not safe."

He sighed, said, "Ambitious people are never silly, which is why they're different from heroes."

LingLing asked, "So heroes are very crazy?"

Chapter 47: Big Merriment Lady Buddha

Li XunHuan said, "The idea of craziness is not humorous, for only those with extreme passions can learn how to be 'crazy'.

LingLing laughed, said, "You have to learn to be crazy?"

Li XunHuan said, "Of course, not everyone can learn how to be crazy. Crazy is not the same as retarded. Only someone crazy about the sword can learn the best sword arts. Only those crazy about love can taste the real love of others. People who are not crazy would never understand these things."

LingLing lowered her head, trying to absorb these words.

After a long time, she sighed softly, said, "I've learned so much from you. Unfortunately... unfortunately, you'll be leaving, and you won't be taking me with you."

Li XunHuan paused, then said, "At least I'll take you back home."

LingLing said, "Then why don't we take the secret passage? It's a lot easier that way."

He laughed, then said tenderly, "Only those afraid of the

light uses secret passages. Unless one absolutely has to, he really should not be using them.”

Although his heart is gloomy, Li XunHuan still tried to make others happier.

LingLing chuckled, said, “Fine. I’ll do what you say. In the future, I’ll never act like a rat.”

Li Xun looked up at the sky, sighed, and said, “Look at this place. Cool breeze, bright moon in the sky, and clear water flowing... How can a person who walks underground enjoy such things?”

LingLing said, “Yet I prefer a bright mooncake in the sky, and wine flowing on the ground...”

She sighed, and added, “To be honest, I’m really hungry. When we get back, the first thing I’m doing is to make some food...”

She suddenly stopped talking, because she smelled food and wine in the distance, carried here by the wind. Obviously, such a smell would carry quite far in the forest.

Li XunHuan said, “Fried chicken, Pork hot pot, peppers... and very fine wine.”

LingLing said, “You also smelled these things?”

Li XunHuan said, “When a man grows old, his ears might go deaf, his eyes might go blind, but his nose will always remain effective.”

LingLing said, “Do you know where the smell is coming from?”

Li XunHuan shook his head, said, "I only know that the little shop here does not have such great wine. Nor can they can they make such great tasting food."

LingLing said, "Besides, that shop is now closed."

Li XunHuan said, "Perhaps there's a family who's cooking late-night dinner."

LingLing said, "That's not possible. I know every single family in this town. None of them are rich. Even if they do have a late-night meal, it would be at most a bowl of noodles."

Li XunHuan muttered, "Perhaps they had relatives visiting. So they are cooking something special..."

LingLing said, "That's not possible either. None of the wives in these families could cook such great food."

She smiled, and continued, "Only one person here can cook such food."

Li XunHuan smiled, said, "Who?"

LingLing pointed at her own nose, and said with a smile, "Me."

She thought for a moment, then said, "That's why I'm so surprised. If I'm not cooking, then where's the smell coming from?"

Li XunHuan said, "The smell is coming from your home."

* * *

The road is silent.

Everyone in the town sleeps early. All the candles are blown out. Yet when they arrived in the maple forest, bright light came from LingLing's home.

Not only did the scent of wine and food come from LingLing's home, but also sounds of chatting.

LingLing froze.

Li XunHuan said, "Perhaps your lady's back?"

LingLing said, "No. She said she'd be away for at least three months."

Li XunHuan said, "Well, you often have guests there anyway. Perhaps the guests couldn't find the host, and decided to cook themselves."

LingLing said, "I'll take a look first. You..."

Li XunHuan said, "Actually, I should go first."

LingLing said, "Why? These people are drinking, dining, and causing a huge racket. Surely they're not hostile. I won't be in any trouble."

Li XunHuan said, "It's just that I'm quite hungry too."

He stepped in front of LingLing, and walked very cautiously. He seemingly sensed a trap in the house, waiting for him to fall in.

The door's open.

When Li XunHuan walked through the door, he froze.

He's never seen so many fat women ever.

There are twice as many fat women inside, than he had seen his whole life.

Over ten women sat in the room. They all sat on the floor, because they won't fit on any chair. If they try to sit on one, that chair would break apart.

No one can claim that they're as fat as pigs, because not even pigs are this fat. And pigs would never eat as much as they.

When Li XunHuan walked in, they were serving a large bowl of fried chicken. These fat women sat around the table eating.

There's a large silk quilt by the table. The fattest woman sat on it. Six men surrounded her.

Every single one of them wore colorful robes. They're all quite young, and fairly handsome. Some even have makeup on their faces.

None of them are skinny. But compared to this woman, they look like little monkeys.

One man massaged her feet. One massaged her shoulders. One waved a fan for her, One held a cup, and fed her wine.

Two men curled by her feet. She held a large fried chicken in her hand. When she's happy, she'd feed a piece or two.

Thankfully, Li XunHuan had not eaten in a while. Otherwise, he'd throw up right now. Li XunHuan had never seen anything so appalling in his whole life.

But he did not leave. Instead walked in calmly.

All sound stopped. All eyes looked at him.

At this moment, anyone else would feel uncomfortable, nervous.

But not Li XunHuan.

Even if he were nervous, it would not appear on his face.

He still walked calmly. Even if he walked through the imperial palace, it would still be in this fashion. Li XunHuan is simply this type of a person.

The fattest woman squinted her eyes.

Her eyes are pretty big, but looked like a thin line when surrounded by so much meat. Her neck might be naturally wide, but it's almost nonexistent with so much meat on it.

Sitting there, she looked like a mountain, a mountain of meat.

Li XunHuan walked in front of her, smiled, and said, "Big Merriment Lady Buddha?"

This woman's eyes brightened. She said, "You know who I am?"

Li XunHuan said, "I've heard of you for quite a while."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "Yet you didn't run away."

Li XunHuan said, "Why would I run away?"

Big Merriment Lady Buddha laughed.

At first, the laugh seemed normal. But suddenly, her whole body started to shake.

Everyone in the room shook with her. There was originally a man on her back. But her tremble sprung him off.

The plates on the table started to vibrate, as if there was an earthquake.

Thankfully, her laughter stopped quickly. She stared at Li XunHuan, said, "Although I don't know who you are, I do know your intention."

Li XunHuan said, "Really?"

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "You're here because of Blue Scorpion, right?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes!"

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "She killed one of my favorite disciple. Was it because of you?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "You want to save her?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha smiled. She said, "Looks like

you're a pretty decent man. At least it was worth her while to kill my disciple."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha raised her thumb and said, "Blue Scorpion is a remarkable woman. She's honorable and brave. After killing my disciple, instead of running away, she actually came to see me. I've never seen a woman like her. You two really are a match made in heaven."

Li XunHuan said, "If you consent to this match, I'd be forever grateful."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "You want to take her away?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "What if I already killed her?"

Li XunHuan said, "If so... I just might have to avenge her death!"

Big Merriment Lady Buddha began to laugh again. She said, "You're not just a decent man, but also quite brave. I truly do not want to kill you."

She stretched her leg, and a man sitting on it sprung up. She said to him, "Go, give some wine to this guest."

This man wore a colorful purple robe. He's quite tall, and has heavy makeup on.

Looking at his stature, and eyes, one can tell that he used to be quite handsome.

Only to see his hands holding a cup, giving it to Li XunHuan

with a smile. He said, "Here's your wine."

Under this circumstance, he can actually smile.

Li XunHuan sighed in his heart, took the wine, and said, "Thank you."

He's courteous to everyone. For he feels that a person is a person regardless of anything else. He never likes to harm another person, even if that person's harming him.

The cup is very big, bigger than most bowls.

Li XunHuan drank it in one gulp.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "Excellent! A man who can drink wine is a good man. None of my men can match you in drinking ability."

That purple-robed man brought another cup to Li XunHuan. He said, "Li Tan Hua can drink thousands of cups without getting drunk. How about another one?"

Li XunHuan froze.

This man actually recognized him.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha raised her eyebrows, and said, "You called him 'Li Tan Hua'? Which 'Li Tan Hua' is he?"

That man said, "There's only one Li Tan Hua. He is obviously the 'Little Li's Flying Dagger' Li XunHuan."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha froze.

Everyone's eyes brightened.

Little Li's Flying Dagger!

In the recent years, few names are more renowned.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha laughed again. She said, "Great. I've always heard that Li Tan Hua's not only brave, but also an excellent drinker. You did not disappoint me. Other than you, I doubt anyone else would dare come here."

That man said, "Little Li's Flying Dagger never misses. Powerful people tend to be brave."

Li XunHuan stared at this man's face. He said, "And you are..."

That man smiled, said, "Li Tan Hua's memory is really getting bad. Do you not even recognize your old friend?"

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "He might not recognize you, but he should recognize your sword techniques."

That man said with a smile, "My sword techniques... I doubt even I can remember my sword techniques."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "You didn't forget them. Now hurry up and grab your sword."

That man's quite obedient. He went to the back room immediately.

Although this man's a bit chubby, he walked pretty fast. In a few seconds, he came back with a sword.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "Show him one of your moves."

She then threw the half-eaten chicken at this man.

Only to hear 'Ding' sound, the sword sparkled.

This man shifted his body, the sword came out, flashing through the air.

The chicken turned into four pieces, all became strung to the sword.

Li XunHuan said in shock, "Incredible!"

He never expected this man to pull off such an incredible sword technique, with such incredible speed. The odd thing is, this sword technique looked familiar. As if it had been used against him before.

This man walked over and said with a smile, "This chicken is quite delicious. Li Tan Hua should taste it."

The pieces of chicken rested on a dark jade sword, looked quite appetizing.

The dark, jade sword shined like a pool of water.

Li XunHuan gasped. He couldn't help but let out a yell.

"Love-Snatching Sword!"

This man is holding the Love-Snatching Sword!

Li XunHuan shuddered as he looked at this man. He said, "You LongSheng? Are you really Hidden Sword Mansion's Young Master You?"

This man laughed, and said, "We really are old friends. You still haven't forgotten me."

He must've laughed too hard, for his makeup began to come off.

This really is You LongSheng? The same handsome young man just two years ago?

Li XunHuan couldn't help but tremble throughout the body. He felt much pity for this young man.

Yet You LongSheng himself doesn't seem to care a bit.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "Can the chefs at Hidden Sword Mansion make chicken like this?"

You LongSheng said, "Their chicken taste like wood."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "Without me, would you ever get to taste chicken like this?"

You LongSheng said, "Of course not."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "Do you like living with me?"

You LongSheng said, "I love it."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "If you had a choice, who would you choose, Blue Scorpion, or me?"

You LongSheng almost crawled to her feet. He said with a bright smile, "Of course my lovely Lady Buddha."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha laughed heartily. She said,

“Very good. You really are a smart young man.”

She suddenly pointed at her own throat, and said, “Come. Let’s give Li XunHuan a demonstration. Stab me right here.”

You LongSheng said, “I can’t do that. What if I accidentally hurt Lady Buddha. My heart would be broken.”

Big Merriment Lady Buddha scolded with a smile, “Little twerp, do you really think you can hurt me? Just stab me.”

She raised her head, and waited for You LongSheng.

You LongSheng paused for a moment, his eyes rolled left and right. When suddenly, he said, “Alright!”

The dark, jade light sparkled, quick as lightning.

You LongSheng doesn’t have Ah Fei’s speed, but he’s still one of the top swordsmen in the world. Li XunHuan is certainly knowledgeable on his skills.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha just sat there, didn’t move at all. If she were a man, she’d look like a Buddha statue.

The lightning-quick sword struck her throat!

Chapter 48: Female Giant

Not only is You LongSheng's sword technique very fast, his sword is one of the sharpest weapons in the world.

Li XunHuan doesn't believe that any flesh could withstand this attack!

Only to hear a shout, as You LongSheng bounced back, and landed on a fat woman beside Li XunHuan.

This woman laughed, and took him into her arms.

That sword remained on Big Merriment Lady Buddha's throat.

Yet Big Merriment Lady Buddha still sat there, still watching Li XunHuan with a big smile.

Li XunHuan was at a loss for words.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha actually squeezed the sword using the fat on her neck!

Not only had no one ever saw this type of kung fu, no one had even heard of it.

Only to hear her say with a smile, "Fat women have their advantages too, don't you think?"

Li XunHuan sighed, and said, "Normal people certainly cannot match Lady Buddha's amazing ability."

His statement was quite sincere, for no one has much fat as she does.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "I've also heard that your flying dagger never misses. Not even my godson could escape it. You must be pretty confident in your dagger, right?"

Li XunHuan did not respond.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "Because of your dagger, you dared to come in, right?"

She smiled, and added, "But do you still think you can kill me?"

Li XunHuan sighed, said, "No."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha laughed. She said, "Do you still want to take Blue Scorpion away?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha frowned, but quickly regained her smile again. She said, "Interesting. You are a very interesting person. How exactly do you plan on taking Blue Scorpion away?"

Li XunHuan said, "I'll think of a way. I'll eventually come up with something."

Big Merriment Lady Buddha started laughing again. She said, "Great. Then why don't you stay here with me, and

think.”

Li XunHuan said, “Since there are so much wine here, I wouldn’t mind staying a while longer.”

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, “But my wine isn’t free.”

Li XunHuan asked, “What do you want me to do?”

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said with a smile, “Before, I thought you looked too old. But the more I look at you, the more I like you. So let’s make a deal. You stay by my side for a few days, and then I’ll let you take Blue Scorpion away.”

Li XunHuan smiled, and said, “I might not be too old for you, but are certainly too fat for me. If you can shave off a few hundred pounds, I wouldn’t mind accompanying you for a few months. But in your current state..”

He shook his head, and continued, “I have absolutely no appetite.”

Big Merriment Lady Buddha’s expression changed greatly. She said coldly, “So you won’t take me on my offer. Fine.”

She suddenly waved her hand.

The four women sitting next to Li XunHuan got up.

Although they’re fat, they’re still nimble. The four quickly surrounded Li XunHuan.

The ceiling’s fairly low, so Li XunHuan couldn’t jump over them. Nor could he go past them. Looking at these women’s fat, Li XunHuan felt revolted.

Yet these women are getting closer and closer, as if trying to squeeze him. If he threw the dagger, he could kill one of them, but would not affect the rest.

If they really squeezed him, Li XunHuan doesn't even want to know how he'd feel.

Only to hear Big Merriment Lady Buddha say, "Li XunHuan, I know you can even escape Shaolin's Luohan Formation, but if you can escape my Meat Formation, then it would really be an accomplishment.

Her laughter became louder and louder, until the columns holding up the building began to shake.

Li XunHuan's eyes brightened, for he suddenly remembered LingLing.

LingLing did not come up with him.

She obviously wouldn't see him die. She must be thinking of a plan...

At this moment, with a loud crack, the whole building broke apart. Everyone began to fall down with it.

A small hole appeared in the ceiling at this time.

Li XunHuan jumped up, and flew out of the hole.

He thought Big Merriment Lady Buddha would surely fall down. Considering her weight, she'd need quite some time to get up again.

Who'd have thought that this Big Merriment Lady Buddha has amazing reflex, and first-rate lightness kung fu. As Li

XunHuan jumped out, he heard a loud tremble.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha made a bigger hole in the ceiling, and came out like a big balloon, shutting out even the moon's light.

Li XunHuan did not look back as he landed in the forest outside,

Only to hear Big Merriment Lady Buddha laughed, and said, "Li XunHuan. Since I've taken a fancy to you, don't think you can escape."

Amidst the laughter, she charged toward Li XunHuan. Li XunHuan felt a huge force from her direction, as if a whole mountain's falling on top of him.

His hand suddenly shot out behind him, as a cold streak of light sparkled. Little Li's Flying Dagger finally came out!

When the dagger leaves his hand, it will never miss!

Blood came out of Big Merriment Lady Buddha's face.

Li XunHuan did not aim for her throat this time, but rather her right eye. He knew that once the dagger leaves his hand, it would reach its target.

He's confident of this.

Yet Big Merriment Lady Buddha's laughter did not pause. Her laughter made Li XunHuan's skin crawl. He couldn't help but turn around, only to see Big Merriment Lady Buddha still walking towards him. Her face is covered with blood. The dagger remained in her right eye.

Yet she felt no pain, and was actually laughing. She said, "Don't think you can escape, Li XunHuan. How many more daggers do you have? Throw them all out. Daggers this tiny, I wouldn't care if you threw a hundred at me." She suddenly pulled out that dagger, and began to chew on it with her mouth.

A dagger made of iron, chewed up into pieces.

Li XunHuan froze.

This woman is not human. She is a monster.

Yet just at this moment, Big Merriment Lady Buddha let out a colossal scream, one that shook the entire forest.

Li XunHuan saw a dark, jade sword tip appearing from her chest. Afterwards, blood spurted out like a heavy storm.

Afterwards, he saw You LongSheng holding the Love-Snatching Sword with both hands. The ten-foot sword pierced through Big Merriment Lady Buddha's back.

The sword went in from the back, through the heart, and came out of the chest.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha fell to the ground, right on top of You LongSheng.

Only to hear numerous bones cracking, as You LongSheng's whole body broke under her. Yet he bit his teeth, not making any sound.

Big Merriment Lady Buddha breathed heavily, and said, "You... It's you!"

You LongSheng said, "You didn't think it would be me, right?"

Big Merriment Lady Buddha said, "I treated you quite well, why did you do this to me?"

Sweat came down You LongSheng's face, as he spoke while biting his teeth, "The reason I haven't died, is because I was waiting for this day..."

He couldn't speak further, as he could no longer breathe from the weight of her body. Just as darkness crept over his eyes, he felt Big Merriment Lady Buddha's body rolling off of him.

Afterwards, he saw those solemn eyes of Li XunHuan. He also felt two hands wiping away the sweat off his face.

Although these two hands can take a person's life at any moment, it can also help a person at any moment. Although this hand can hold a lethal dagger, it can also hold a fistful of compassion.

You LongSheng tried to smile, but failed. He gathered his strength to say, "I'm not You LongSheng."

Li XunHuan paused for a moment, then nodded. He said, "You're not."

You LongSheng said, "You LongSheng's already dead."

Li XunHuan said, "I understand."

You LongSheng said, "You did not see You LongSheng today."

Li XunHuan said, "I just know that he's my friend. Other than that, I know nothing."

You LongSheng finally smiled on the corner of his mouth. He said, "I'm quite honored to have a friend like you. Unfortunately..."

He tried to gather his last breath, and then shouted, "Unfortunately, I could not die in your hands!"

* * *

Dawn.

Three new graves appeared in the wood. One is You LongSheng's. One is Blue Scorpion's. One is Big Merriment Lady Buddha's. Her disciples made these graves.

Her disciples didn't seem to care much for her death. This Lady Buddha clearly didn't have the heart of Buddha. She apparently wasn't loved while alive.

It was indeed LingLing who crashed the house.

She was quite proud of herself, "I just loosened a single column, and the whole thing fell apart. Without my quick-thinking, you'd be crushed by now."

When she saw that all of Big Merriment's disciples gone, LingLing was very surprised.

Why didn't they try to avenge their master?

Li XunHuan said, "Perhaps, while this Lady Buddha tried to fill up their stomachs, she didn't take the time to care for their hearts."

LingLing said, "You're right. If a person's too full, he'd be too

lazy to care for other things.”

LingLing pouted, said, “I know you only have Blue Scorpion in your heart. Her waist’s thinner than mine.”

Li XunHuan said, “You think my heart is only filled with Blue Scorpion?”

LingLing said, “Of course. You were willing to risk your life for her. Actually, she was long dead. You didn’t have to worry about her.”

Li XunHuan said, “If she were my friend in life, she’d still be my friend in death.”

LingLing said, “So... am I your friend?”

Li XunHuan said, “Of course.”

LingLing said, “If you can risk your life for a dead friend, then why haven’t you thought about your live friend?”

As she spoke, her eyes became redder and redder, and continued, “I have no relatives. Now I don’t even have a home. Are you really going to let me beg for food everyday?”

Li XunHuan could only laugh in bitterness.

He found that this little girl’s is getting better at speaking.

LingLing glanced at him between the cracks in her fingers, said, “Besides, if you don’t take me, how are you going to find my lady? How are you going to find your friend Ah Fei?”

* * *

Ah Fei's drinking soup.

Beef soup. Very savory, very hot.

Ah Fei held the bowl with both hands, and sipped it slowly. His eyes stared at the soup, without any expression. As if he can't even distinguish the soup's taste.

Lin XianEr sat beside him, resting her cheek on her hand. She said, "You don't look too happy these past few days. Drink more soup. This soup is very nutritious, and it won't taste good when cold."

Ah Fei quickly drank the whole bowl.

Lin XianEr wiped his chin, and said, "Does it taste good?"

Ah Fei said, "Yes."

Lin XianEr said, "Do you want another bowl?"

Ah Fei said, "Yes."

Lin XianEr said, "See, there's my good boy. You've been eating less and less recently. You need more food."

The room is quite plain, but the walls were recently painted. Even the kitchen is clean, because they've only been living here for two days.

Lin XianEr got another bowl of soup, and put it in front of Ah Fei. She said with a smile, "Although this place is small, the market's quite big. Too bad the meat seller bullies the new people. One pound of meat cost me ten coins."

Ah Fei suddenly said, "Let's stop having beef soup tomorrow."

Lin XianEr said, "Why? You don't like it?"

Ah Fei said, "I love the soup, but we can't afford it."

Lin XianEr smiled. She said gently, "Don't worry about money. Fox skin is quite popular these days. I got more than twenty-seven taels of silver from your fox hunts last month."

Ah Fei said, "But those money will be gone. There are no foxes to hunt here."

Lin XianEr said, "Let's not worry about that. Besides, I still have some money saved."

Ah Fei said, "I can't use your money."

Lin XianEr's face turned red. She lowered her head and said, "Why not? I didn't steal or seize this money. I earned it all by mending other people's clothes."

Chapter 49: Each Person's Own Plan

As she spoke, tears came down Lin XianEr's eyes. She said faintly, "You know, I gave away those money from before, just like you asked. You don't believe me?"

Ah Fei sighed deeply, and said, "It's not that I don't believe you. It's just that... I should be taking care of you. I can't let you work."

Lin XianEr said in tears, "But we are already so in love. There's no 'yours' and 'mine' in our relationship. Even my heart is yours. Don't you know?"

Ah Fei closed his eyes, and held her hands tightly in his. If he can only hold onto these hands forever, Ah Fei would never ask for anything else.

Ah Fei finally went to sleep.

Lin XianEr removed her hands from his grasp.

She then walked back to her room. Then from her chest, took out a small jar.

She poured herself a cup of tea. Then she took out some powder from the jar, and swallowed it. She never forgets to eat this powder everyday.

Because this powder was made from crushed pearls. A woman supposedly could keep her beauty by eating them.

Holding the jar in her hand, Lin XianEr chuckled.

If Ah Fei knew how much this jar of powder is worth, he'd get a good scare.

She found that men are so easily fooled, especially by the woman they love. That's why she always found men pitiful, and amusing.

She has never seen a man who can't be tricked.

Perhaps only one... Li XunHuan.

When she thought of Li XunHuan, Lin XianEr's mood sank.

Today should be the fifth day of the tenth month.

Is Li XunHuan dead yet? Why is there no news?

Suddenly, footsteps came from afar. Two youngsters, carrying a carriage, walked briskly toward the house. They stopped in front of the front door.

After a while, Lin XianEr came out quietly. She locked the door and got on the carriage. Then she pulled down the blinds. The blinds aren't very tight. So she can see outside, but no one could see her.

The carriage rose from the ground, and sped away.

By her house is a thick forest, where the leaves still had not fallen. A small temple resided next to the forest. On the right side of it is a barren graveyard.

The carriage stopped here. The youngster in the front took out a lantern from the bottom of the carriage. He lit the lantern, and held it high above his head. There's a bright red plum flower sewn on the lantern.

After the lantern was raised, four shadows, from four different directions, came towards the light.

All of these four people moved briskly, as if they're very excited. But they found that they're not alone, their steps slowed down. Each glanced at one another, their gaze showed caution, as well as some enmity.

The one who came from the forest is a round-faced middle-aged man. He wore very extravagantly, like a rich merchant.

But his movement showed powerful inner power.

Two people came from the graveyard. The one on the right is a small man. He looks like a suspicious thief, but his lightness kung fu is definitely first class.

The one on the left is neither tall nor short, neither fat nor skinny. His clothing is also very ordinary, just like every other part of his appearance.

But his lightness kung fu is a notch higher than the short man besides him.

The man who came out of the temple is the youngest, but also looked the most distinguished. Despite utilizing lightness kung fu, he kept his steps heavy. This person certainly has the best kung fu among the four.

Lin XianEr knew it these four people would come. She didn't

even look out, much less get off the carriage. Lin XianEr only smiled and said, "The four of you have had a long journey. I'm sorry there's no wine to welcome everyone."

When the four heard her voice, they unconsciously began to smile. All wanted to say something first, but after looking at one another, none spoke up.

Lin XianEr said, "I know all four of you want to speak. Who wants to go first?"

The plain-looking person had no expression. He seemed to be afraid of going first.

The blue-robed youngster raised his eyebrows, put his hands behind his back, and turned around. He didn't think these people are worthy to be next to him. Therefore, he didn't care to speak first.

The round-faced middle-aged man smiled, and said to the black-robed man, "Why don't you go first?"

That black-robed man didn't seem to mind, and stepped in front of the carriage.

Lin XianEr said with a smile, "Since seeing you two months ago, your lightness kung fu has improved greatly. Congratulations."

The black-robe man's nasty-looking face beamed with pride. He said, "Thank you, my lady."

Lin XianEr said, "I asked you to do two things. Surely you've done both, right?"

The black-robed man took out a stack of bank notes. He

handed them over submissively and said, "I was able to collect on all the accounts. The total is nine thousand eight hundred and fifty taels. The notes are from Shang Xi province's 'Double Fortune' Bank."

Lin XianEr's tender arm reached out of her carriage, and took the bank notes. She seemingly counted the notes first, before speaking in a smile, "I'm really sorry to have troubled you. I wonder how I should repay you."

The black-robed man had been staring blankly at the spot Lin XianEr's arm came out. Only now did he force a laugh and said, "Oh, you don't need to thank me. Just as long as you can remember me."

Lin XianEr said, "What about that storyteller Old Man Sun, and his granddaughter? You must have found their location, right?"

The black-robed man lowered his head and said, "I had been following them. But after a while, they suddenly disappeared. It's as if... as if they vanished into thin air."

Lin XianEr did not speak.

The black-robed man smiled lightly and said, "These two people's movements are quite mysterious. They pretend not to know any kung fu, but that is definitely not the case. If my lady could give me more time, I'll surely find their whereabouts."

Lin XianEr thought for a moment, sighed, and said, "Don't bother. I didn't believe you could follow them either. So even though you failed, I don't blame you. Afterwards I have more things for you to do."

The black-robed man let out a sigh of relief, and backed out to the side.

That round-faced man put his fists together and bowed to the other two people. He said, "My apologies. My apologies."

As he spoke, he walked in front of Lin XianEr's carriage.

Lin XianEr said with a smile, "Businessmen really do have great manners. You now look like a big boss."

This person smiled brightly, and said, "I'm just an underling for my lady. Without my lady's grace, I am nothing. I do not deserve to be called a boss."

Lin XianEr said tenderly, "Worker, boss, what's the difference? My business is your business. If you keep up the good work, this business will be yours soon."

This middle-aged man's face turned bright red.

He thanked Lin XianEr over and over, before taking out the bank notes in his pockets, and handed over submissively. He said, "This is last year's earnings, also in 'Double Fortune' Bank's notes."

Lin XianEr said, "You've done so much. I've always known that you are both honest and hardworking..."

She had long taken the bank notes, and counted them while she spoke. At this moment, her voice suddenly changed. Without a hint of smile, she said, "How come there's only six thousand taels?"

The middle-aged man said, "Six thousand three hundred taels."

Lin XianEr said, "What about last year?"

The middle-aged man said, "Nine thousand four hundred taels."

Lin XianEr said, "And the year before last?"

The middle-aged man wiped away some sweat, and said, "I think it's... it's over ten thousand."

Lin XianEr snickered, and said, "You really are amazing. You can turn the business smaller and smaller. After a few more years, I can just go ahead and close the shops."

The middle-aged man sweated profusely. He stuttered, "In the past two years, satin robes became unpopular. Poplin cloth earnings weren't great either. But next year will surely be much better."

Lin XianEr thought for a while, and then said tenderly, "I know you've been through a lot the past two years. You really should go back to your hometown and rest."

The middle-aged man's expression changed dramatically. He said, "But... but the business..."

Lin XianEr said, "Don't worry, I'll put someone else in charge."

The middle-aged man's face was filled with shock and rage. He retreated step by step. Then suddenly, he flew into midair, headed towards the forest.

After a few steps, a cold light sparkled.

In the midst of a loud scream, blood splattered on the ground. His body fell to the ground!

A green, steel sword appeared in the hands of that blue-robed youngster. Blood trickled down the tip.

That gray-robed man glanced at him, but did not change his expression. He only said, "Good sword move."

The blue-robed youngster didn't even look at him. He cleaned the blood under the bottom of his shoes. Then he did a sword-flower*, before returning the sword to its sheath.

*Note: Sword-Flower is when the user spins around the sword for show.

The gray-robed man did not speak further, simply stood there quietly.

He waited for a long time, until he's sure the blue-robed youngster would not speak up. Then he walked slowly towards the carriage.

Perhaps Lin XianEr knew this person couldn't be moved by sweet words. So she got directly to the point, said, "Is Long Xiao4Yun back at Happy Cloud Manor?"

The gray-robed man said, "Yes, for almost two weeks now. Not only did Hu BuGui go with him, so did a man with the surname 'Lu'. I heard he's a half-brother of Lu FengXian. He also uses double halberd, and should have first-rate kung fu.

Lin XianEr said, "What about that Hunchback Sun?"

The gray-robed man said, "He's still in his shop. This guy really hid his identity well. No one knows anything about

him.”

Li XianEr said, “But I know that you’ll find out eventually. Nothing escapes your eyes.” The gray-robed man smiled, and said, “If my guess is correct, that hunchback is related that storyteller Old Man Sun. Perhaps he’s the ‘A Mountain on his Back, A Mountain He can Crush’ Second Sun from days back.”

Lin XianEr was at least a bit shocked by this. After thinking some more, she said, “Try to get some more information. Tomorrow...”

Her voice became softer and softer. The gray-robed man had to get close to hear. After a few sentences, his normally expressionless face beamed brightly. As he left, his steps became livelier.

Lin XianEr really knows how to command a man around.

Then, Lin XianEr’s arm came out of the carriage again, and gestured the black-robed man to get closer.

The black-robed man stood there in a trance.

Lin XianEr said tenderly, “Come here. I need to say something to you. Tomorrow night...”

She spoke softly into the black-robed man’s ears.

The black-robed man smiled brightly, as he nodded, and responded, “Yes... yes... yes... I understand... How can I forget?”

When he left, he looked three feet taller.

After he disappeared, that blue-robed youngster walked

over, and said coldly, "Miss Lin. You certainly are a busy person."

Lin XianEr sighed, and said, "But what else can I do? They're not like you. I have to be careful with them."

She reached out her hand, and grabbed this youngster's hand. She said tenderly, "Are you still mad at me?"

The blue-robed youngster kept his stern face, said, "Ah huh." Lin XianEr chuckled, and said, "Look at you. Just like a little kid. Come onto the carriage. I'll calm your anger."

The blue-robed youngster still wanted to keep his stern face, but couldn't help smiling.

At this moment, they suddenly heard a loud scream...

The scream came from the forest.

The gray-robed man had already entered the forest, but he backed out at this moment, step by step. As he retreated, blood followed.

The black-robed man had planned to enter the forest, but he suddenly stopped upon this sight. The gray-robed man fell down by his feet.

Could he have seen a ghost in the forest?

A ghost that can kill?

The black-robed man stuttered a bit, and took out the dagger on his leg. He stared into the dense forest, and asked, "Who are you?"

No human sound came from the forest. After a while, a person came out.

This person's very tall. He wore a large bamboo hat, which covered most of his face. He walked very strangely, and positioned his sword differently from most people. His sword is only leisurely strapped to his waist.

The sword isn't long, and isn't unsheathed.

This person also doesn't look very menacing. But when the black-robed man saw this person, his body shook for some unknown reason. Cold sweat came out of his hands.

This person carried a killer aura.

Jin WuMing.

Since Jin WuMing's still alive, Li XunHuan's obviously dead.

Lin XianEr smiled.

But she only smiled inside. Her face looked incredibly scared. She grabbed onto that youngster tightly, and said, "This person looks really scary. Do you know who he is?"

The blue-robed youngster forced a smile, said, "It doesn't matter who he is. As long as I'm here, you don't need to be scared."

Lin XianEr said, "I'm not scared. I know you'll protect me. As long as I'm by your side, nothing can hurt me."

The blue-robed youngster raised his chest and said, "Right. No matter who he is, if he dares to come, I'll take his life!"

Actually, he's incredibly afraid of Jin WuMing's killer aura. But he's still young, unwilling to look weak in front of the woman he loves."

Jin WuMing walked in front of the black-robed man.

The black-robed man held his dagger. This dagger had killed countless people before. But at this moment, the dagger could not attack.

He saw the empty eyes on Jin WuMing's face.

Jin WuMing didn't even seem to notice him. He said coldly, "Can the dagger in your hand kill?"

The black-robed man froze.

This question sounded so incredibly stupid. But since someone asked, he had to answer. So he said, "Of course it can kill."

Jin WuMing said, "Good. Now come kill me."

The black-robed man hesitated for a moment, then said, "We're not enemies. Why should I kill you?"

Jin WuMing said, "Because if you don't kill me, I'll kill you."

The black-robed man backed off a few steps. When suddenly he bit his teeth, and the dagger dashed forward like lightning.

Right when his dagger came out, a sword sparkled across the darkness.

Then a loud scream followed. Looking at Jin WuMing again,

his sword in its natural position. As if it never moved at all.

What an incredibly fast sword!

The blue-robed youngster is famous swordsman. He always felt that his own sword is already very fast. Never did he think that someone else would be faster.

Until now.

Lin XianEr saw the tension in the youngster's muscles. She suddenly let go of her hand, and said, "This person's sword is too fast. You... you need to run away quickly. Don't worry about me."

If the blue-robed youngster was forty or fifty years old, he'd immediately take Lin XianEr's advice. If a person lived to be that old, he would know that life is more important than face. Should someone ever say, 'Life is precious, but love is more precious.' Then that person must be a young person.

Anyone who says this phrase would never live till fifty.

The blue-robed youngster bit his teeth, and yelled, "Don't worry, I'll take care of him!"

There's not much determination in his words. So he didn't attack.

Lin XianEr said, "No... you can't die. You have your parents, wife, and children to think about. Get away while you can. I'll shield you as much as I can. I have no relatives. So no one would care if I die."

The blue-robed youngster let out a loud roar, and dashed forward.

Lin XianEr smiled.

If a woman wants a man to risk his life for her, the best way is to let him know that she loves him. That she would risk her life for him.

Lin XianEr used this method countless times. It never failed.

This time, not only is she smiling inside, but also on her face.

Because she knew that this blue-robed youngster would never see the smile again.

This youngster not only has incredible sword skills, but also an incredible sword.

In an instant, he attacked Jin WuMing five times. But he said no words, realizing that words are pointless against this man.

Jin WuMing did not attack.

Each of these five strikes aimed at Jin WuMing's vital spots. But all missed.

Jin WuMing suddenly said, "You are in the Dian Cang Sect?"

The blue-robed youngster froze. The sixth strike would not come out.

He doesn't know how this person could see through his master's unique sword art.

Jin WuMing said, "What's your relationship with Xie TianLing?"

The blue-robed youngster said, “He’s... he’s my master.”

Jin WuMing said, “I already killed Guo SongYang.”

This sentence seemingly came out of the thin air. As it did not appear related to this conversation.

But this blue-robed youngster knew exactly what he meant.

Chapter 50: Trap of Tenderness

Xie TianLing is the head of the Dian Cang Sect. He's called the 'First Sword South of Heaven'. He has never met a match in life, except losing three times to Guo SongYang. And he lost every time without argument.

If this person could kill Guo SongYang, then he's obviously also better than Xie TianLing. A disciple of Xie TianLing surely would not be his match.

The blue-robed youngster's face sunk.

Anyone could see that Jin WuMing is not one who exaggerates.

Jin WuMing said, "I can kill you in one blow. Do you believe me?"

The blue-eyed youngster bit his lips, but did not respond.

Only to see the sparkle of a sword flash by, Jin WuMing's sword came out of nowhere.

The cold sword tip reached the blue-robed youngster's throat.

Jin WuMing said, "I can kill you in one blow. Do you believe

me?”

Sweat poured down the blue-robed youngster's face. He bit his lips so hard blood came out. But he yelled, “Why don't you just kill me?”

Jin WuMing said, “You want to die?”

The blue-robed youngster yelled, “A true man's not afraid of death. Go ahead and kill me.”

Jin WuMing said, “If I didn't want to kill you, would you still want to die?”

The blue-robed youngster froze.

If he didn't have to, who would possibly want to die?

Jin WuMing said, “I know you want to die for her. So she would think that you're a hero. But if you do die, would she really still like you?”

He continued coldly, “If she died, would you still love her?”

The blue-robed youngster couldn't answer.

He felt the cold tip of the sword leaving his throat.

He felt like an idiot.

Jin WuMing said, “In a woman's eyes, a hundred dead heroes, wouldn't compare to a live coward. Just as in your eyes, a hundred dead beautiful women, wouldn't compare to a live woman... Do you not understand this?”

The blue-robed youngster wiped some sweat off his face. He

said, "I understand."

Jin WuMing said, "Do you still want to die?"

The blue-robed youngster said with a red face, "Living isn't a bad thing."

Jin WuMing said, "Good. You finally understand."

He continued, "I usually never like to be wordy. Yet I talked a great deal today, just so you can understand this... Only after you understand this, can I kill you."

The blue-robed youngster suddenly asked, "You want to kill me?"

Jin WuMing said, "My rule is that I only ask questions, not answer them. But I do make an exception to those about to die."

The blue-robed youngster said, "But... but if you want to kill me, then why say all those things?"

Jin WuMing said, "Because I never kill those who wants to die... If you wanted to die, then I would feel no pleasure in killing you."

The blue-robed youngster let out a loud roar, he attacked with his sword.

His roar was incredibly short. Because just as he raised his hand, Jin WuMing's sword had already entered his mouth. The icy cold tip passed by his tongue.

It's a bit salty.

He finally tasted death.

The sword reentered its sheath.

Jin WuMing has a very good habit. He also puts his sword back into the sheath immediately after use. As if he doesn't plan on using it in the near future.

Because he knew that when people see his sword in a sheath, they'd be more careless.

He likes careless people. They tend to die faster.

Lin XianEr stared at him this whole time, examining his every move. Her face carried a tender smile, like a young girl looking at her lover.

Jin WuMing never even looked at her.

Lin XianEr put on her sexiest pose, yet he still didn't look at her.

Although Lin XianEr's still smiling, she began to feel uneasy.

She felt that something's wrong.

Everyone she's slept with would stare her at every opportunity. But this person's eyes seemed to be avoiding her like poison.

The two people holding the carriages stared at her like their eyes are about to pop. They didn't even notice the lightning quick sword flash by.

As the two screamed, Jin WuMing's sword had returned to the sheath.

He's now standing in front Lin XianEr.

But his cold, dead eyes still gazed into the distance.

There's only darkness in the distance.

Lin XianEr sighed, and said, "Why won't you look at me. Are you afraid that after seeing me, you won't be able to kill me?"

Jin WuMing's muscles by his lips twitched. After a long time, he finally said, "You know that I'm here to kill you?"

Lin XianEr nodded and said, "I know... No matter how cold, how ruthless a person. When he has to kill the person he loves, his expression would seem different.

She smiled, and continued, "I just want to ask you one question. Since I'm about to die, surely you would answer my question, right?"

Jin WuMing remained silent for a long time, before he finally said, "Ask. In front of those about to die, I never lie."

Lin XianEr stared into his expressionless face, and asked, "I just want to ask you one thing. Who asked you to kill me? And why?"

Jin WuMing tightened his fist, and said loudly, "No one else. No reason."

Lin XianEr said, "There must be someone else... because you can't possibly want to kill me." She laughed, in a very cold manner. Afterwards, she said faintly, "I know you love me, and would never want to hurt me."

Jin WuMing tightened his fist even more. One can almost hear the bone cracking.

But his face remained expressionless. Jin WuMing asked, "You really know? You are certain?"

Lin XianEr said, "Yes. I'm certain. If you don't love me, then you wouldn't have killed these people."

Jin WuMing actually didn't cut her off. He let her continue.

Lin XianEr said, "You killed them... because you are jealous of them."

Jin WuMing said, "Jealous?"

Lin XianEr said, "Anyone who touched me, or even saw me, you want to kill. That's jealousy. If you didn't love me, why would you be jealous?"

Jin WuMing's face turned pure white. He said coldly, "I just know that I want to kill you. If I want to kill someone, then that person will not live!"

Lin XianEr said, "If you really want to kill me, then why won't you look at me? You're afraid?"

Jin WuMing's hand held his sword tightly. Even with the dim moonlight, one can see sweat coming down his forehead.

Cold sweat.

Lin XianEr stared at his face. She then said slowly, "If you can't even look at me, even if you kill me, you'll regret it."

She reached out her hand, testing his reaction.

Jin WuMing did not move.

Lin XianEr's hand finally grabbed his. Then she threw herself into his chest, and said, "If you can't make up your mind, then take me to him."

Her hands are very soothing, and know when to stop.

Jin WuMing's breathing was very fast, obviously quite nervous. He said, "Who... who do you want to see?"

Lin XianEr said, "The person who asked you to kill me. I know I can change his mind..."

She bit his ear softly and said, "Don't worry, you won't regret this decision."

Jin WuMing still didn't look at her. But he did turn his head, towards the dark forest.

Lin XianEr rolled her eyes and whispered, "He's in that forest?"

Jin WuMing did not respond. He didn't have to.

Lin XianEr said tenderly, "Alright. I'll go see him now. If he still won't let me go, then you can kill me."

Only after she turned around, did he finally see her back. In the midst of those gray, dead eyes, for the first time, was emotion.

But what kind of emotion? Happiness? Sadness? Hatred?

He doesn't even know himself.

There's no light within the forest.

Although Lin XianEr did not walk very fast, she still almost bumped into someone.

This person just stood there, like a mountain, an ice mountain.

Lin XianEr could've avoided him, but she didn't do this. Her whole body fell into his chest.

This person did not try to help her up.

Lin XianEr caught her breath, and regained her balance. She said, "It's really dark here... terribly sorry."

She's only about a feet from this person. She believes that this person can smell her breath. She believes that it will move this person's heart.

But this person simply said calmly, "Did you use this method to make Jin WuMing not kill you?"

Lin XianEr said, "So you're the one who wants to kill me? You are Clan Leader ShangGuan?"

This person said, "Yes. I can also tell you, that this method doesn't work on me."

His tone was not cold, nor vicious, but simply very even, without any emotion. All his words sound like he's reading a book.

Lin XianEr said, "Then what method does work against you?"

ShangGuan JinHong said, "If you have more techniques, feel free to try them all."

Lin XianEr said, "I know you're not someone who's easily moved by women. But why do you want Jin WuMing to kill me?"

ShangGuan JinHong said, "A trained killer cannot have emotions. It's not easy to train an absolutely ruthless killer. I don't want him ruined because of you."

Lin XianEr laughed. She said, "But if you have him kill me, then your losses would be even bigger."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Really?"

Lin XianEr said, "Because I'm much more useful than Jin WuMing."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Really?"

Lin XianEr said, "Jin WuMing only knows how to kill. I know how to kill too. He has to kill with a sword, and cause blood to drip. I can kill without a weapon, and without blood."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "But he can kill faster than you."

Lin XianEr said, "Sometimes it's better to kill slowly, don't you think?"

ShangGuan JinHong thought for a long time, before asking, "Other than killing, what else are you good for?"

Lin XianEr said, "I also have money. So much money I can't even count. Too much for me to ever spend."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "This is indeed a very good thing."

There seem to be a hint of a smile within his words, because he knows very well the usefulness of money.

Lin XianEr said, "I'm also very smart. I can help you with a lot of things."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "You're right. A dumb person could never be rich."

Lin XianEr said, "Other than those things, I can also offer you something else..."

Her voice suddenly lowered to a whisper, as she said with a smile, "As long as you are a man. You can find out very quickly that I'm right."

After thinking for a moment, ShangGuan JinHong said, "I am a man."

A fog appeared in the forest.

Jin WuMing's whole body was covered by this fog.

He still stood there motionless. As if he's just a piece of wood.

The fog was very thick. So one can't see anything.

What's that noise? Moaning? Or gasping for breath?

Lin XianEr said, "It's almost dawn. I need to get back."

ShangGuan JinHong asked, "Why?"

Lin XianEr said, "Someone is waiting for me."

ShangGuan JinHong asked, "Who?"

Lin XianEr said, "Ah Fei. Surely you've heard of him."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "I'm just surprised that you haven't killed him yet. You take way too much time."

Lin XianEr said, "I can't kill him, nor dare to."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Why?"

Lin XianEr said, "If I kill him, then Li XunHuan would surely kill me."

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly stopped talking.

Lin XianEr sighed, and said, "I know you didn't kill you Li XunHuan, or you wouldn't have Jin WuMing kill me. Because you need Jin WuMing against Li XunHuan, you need him in peak condition."

ShangGuan JinHong thought for a long time, before he said, "You really fear Li XunHuan that much?"

Lin XianEr said, "Oh, I am terrified of him."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Do you fear him more than me?"

Lin XianEr said, "Yes. He's worse than you. Because I have ways to move your heart, but not his."

She sighed, and added, "He doesn't want anything. That's what makes him so dangerous."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "He's also human. He must have a weakness."

Lin XianEr said, "His only weakness is Lin ShiYin. But I can't use Lin ShiYin to threaten him."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Why?"

Lin XianEr said, "Because I have no confidence of success. Whenever I see him holding the dagger, I'd lose all confidence in myself."

She took a deep breath, and said, "As long as he's alive, I can't do anything to Ah Fei."

ShangGuan JinHong thought for a long time, before he said, "Don't worry. He won't live for long."

Chapter 51 : Peculiar Scene

The fog disappeared.

Jin WuMing still stood there motionless. His dead, gray eyes focused on a dew falling off the side of his hat.

He didn't seem to notice ShangGuan JinHong walking out the forest alone.

ShangGuan JinHong didn't look at him either. He just walked casually past Jin WuMing, and said leisurely, "There's fog today. It must be a good day."

Jin WuMing hesitated for a moment, then said, "There's fog today. It must be a good day."

He finally turned around, and walked in sync behind ShangGuan JinHong. One in the front, one in the back, both disappeared into the fog.

* * *

The street is very crowded, almost as much as the Sky Bridge* in the capital city. There are all sorts of things to buy here. It's still not noon yet, but vendors have already setup booths all over the street. There are all sorts of snacks, all sorts of circus acts, and all sorts of customers.

*Note: Sky Bridge is a location in old Beijing famous for its circus atmosphere.

LingLing was almost blinded by the sight. She has never been this happy before.

After all, she is still a kid.

She never expected Li XunHuan to take her to this place.

So there is an inner child in his heart.

Seeing Li XunHuan holding a candy gourd*, LingLing wanted to laugh.

*Note: This is a popular Chinese snack. I don't know the exact process for making it, but I think gourd is first hardened, then dipped into molasses, and lastly stacked onto a stick.

They just bought these candy gourds, quite a few sticks of them. Shiny red gourds stuck on a stick, like big, red jewels.

All girls love jewels. LingLing bought every single one the seller had. Too bad she only has two hands, and couldn't carry all of them.

A girl would never feel that she has bought too much of something.

Li XunHuan had to carry some for her.

Actually, he has also bought candy gourds himself. But that was a long time ago. At that time, he still didn't know about grief, about worry.

What about now?

He is certainly worried about something. He has been staring at a person, staring for a long time.

This person walked in front of him. He wore a dirty robe, a pair of straw sandals. On his head is a straw hat. This person never looked up, as if he didn't want to see anyone.

He walked like a hunchback, but has wide shoulders. Should he straighten up, this man would look quite imposing.

Even so, this person doesn't look all that extraordinary. At best he's a destitute martial arts practitioner. Possibly he's just a beggar.

Yet Li XunHuan noticed him with the first gaze.

No matter where he went, Li XunHuan followed. That's why they are now on this street.

Oddly enough, Li XunHuan isn't the only person following this man.

Li XunHuan originally planned to catch up, to see this man's face. When suddenly, he saw another person following behind the beggar.

This person's very skinny, very tall, and has light steps. Despite his ordinary clothing, the man's eyes shined brightly, full of energy.

Li XunHuan knew this man's no ordinary person.

He didn't seem to notice Li XunHuan, though. He

concentrated fully on the beggar. When the beggar walked faster, he would walk faster. When the beggar slowed down, he would slow down. When the beggar stopped, he would stop. And pretend to straighten his clothes, or adjust his shoes. But his eyes would never leave the beggar.

He certainly is an expert at spying.

So why would he spy on a beggar?

What's the point? What's his relationship with the beggar?

The beggar didn't seem to notice that he's being followed. He continued to walk slowly, without ever turning around.

If someone gives him some money, he'd take it. Otherwise, he never bothered to beg for any.

LingLing's eyeballs moved continuously. She suddenly grabbed Li XunHuan's sleeves and asked, "Are we following that beggar?"

This little girl really is clever.

Li XunHuan nodded, and whispered, "That's why we must speak quietly."

LingLing said, "Who is he? Why are we following him?"

Li XunHuan said, "This doesn't concern you."

LingLing said, "That's why I have to ask you. If you won't tell me, I'll ask loudly again."

Li XunHuan sighed, and said, "He looks like an old friend of mine."

LingLing was surprised. She said, "Your old friend? Is he a member of the Beggar's Clan?"

Li XunHuan said, "No."

LingLing said, "Then who is he?"

Li XunHuan said with a sullen face, "You wouldn't know his name even if I told you."

LingLing remained silent for a while, when she suddenly said, "There's someone else following the beggar too. Do you see him?"

Li XunHuan chuckled, and said, "You are quite observant."

LingLing also chuckled, and said, "So who is he? Is he also one of your friends?"

Li XunHuan said, "No."

LingLing said, "Really? So is he your friend's enemy?"

Li XunHuan said, "Perhaps..."

LingLing said, "Then why don't you warn your friend?"

Li XunHuan sighed, and said, "My friend's quite strange. He never likes for anyone to help him."

LingLing said, "But..."

She didn't finish this sentence.

Because she was busy looking at something, looking very

intently.

This street is quite long. They've only walked about half its length.

The beggar walked in front of a wonton seller.

Near them, a person was selling wine carried on his shoulder-pole. Several people were drinking by the wine seller. One is a blind fortune-teller, his face quite pale.

On the opposite end of the street stood a burly green-robed man.

A person, carrying two cases of smelly-tofu on his shoulder-pole, walked over there.

There's also a very tall married-woman. She had been examining makeup and sewing items. But at this moment, she looked up. One of her eyes has been blinded.

When the beggar walked close...

The wine seller suddenly lowered his shoulder-pole.

The blind fortune-teller lowered his wine cup.

The burly green-robed man walked out from where he stood.

The one-eyed woman turned around abruptly, almost knocking down the makeup items besides her.

In addition to that tall, skinny follower, these people surrounded the beggar.

The smelly-tofu seller suddenly walked in front of the

beggar, blocking his path!

There are many other people on the street. But these few people are quite noticeable. Even LingLing realized that something's wrong. Li XunHuan's face sank. He had long thought that the beggar was Tie ChuanJia. Now there's no doubt.

He must be very careful.

He knew that these people harbored deep hatred for Tie ChuanJia. They must've planned this ambush in detail. Leaving no chance for Tie ChuanJia to escape. If they knew someone could help Tie ChuanJia, they might decide to kill him immediately.

Even if it costs him his life, Li XunHuan would not let any harm come towards Tie ChuanJia. He doesn't owe favors to many people in this world. Tie ChuanJia is one of the few.

Li XunHuan cannot lose a friend like him.

At this moment, those people had surrounded the beggar.

In a flash, three sharp daggers leaned on the beggar's body. The people besides them realized what's going on, and dispersed.

No one wants to get involved in these sorts of things.

Only to hear the blind fortune-teller say coldly, "Come with us. Don't say a single word. Understand?"

The burly green-robed man said, "Follow orders, and you might live a bit longer. Do something rash, and you just might die immediately.

The beggar responded quite slowly. Only now did he nod.

The one-eyed married-woman gave him a push from behind. She said, "Start walking. What are you waiting for?"

With this push, the straw hat on the beggar came off, showing his face.

The face looked quite yellow, as if he just recovered from a serious illness. His nose was red and crooked. His mouth widened, smiling foolishly at these people.

This person is Tie Chuanjia? Of course not. He looked more like a retard.

Li XunHuan wanted to laugh.

The one-eyed married-woman was absolutely fuming. She yelled, "Fifth brother. How did this happen?"

The tall, skinny man's face turned pale. He said, "But... I was sure he's Tie Chuanjia. I never let him out of my sight. How could... this have happened?"

The burly green-robed man slapped the beggar across the face, and yelled, "Who are you?"

The beggar still smiled foolishly. He said, "I'm me. You're you. Why did you hit me?"

The wine seller said, "Perhaps he's Tie Chuanjia in disguise. Let's try to peel off his mask."

The blind fortune-teller suddenly said, "No need. This person is not Tie Chuanjia."

Only this blind man's face remained calm and cold.

The burly green-robed man said, "Second brother, did you recognize his voice?"

The blind man said, "Tie Chuanjia would rather die than let you slap him."

The tall, thin man said, "This person must've been in cahoots with Tie Chuanjia. They switched places somehow, so Tie Chuanjia could escape."

The one-eyed married-woman yelled angrily, "How could you let him get away like that?"

The tall, thin man lowered his head, and said, "Perhaps... when he was at the restroom. After all, I can't exactly..."

The burly green-robed man yelled, "So you're a buddy of Tie Chuanjia. I'm going to kill you."

He raised a shoulder-pole, about to strike down upon the beggar.

At this moment, Li XunHuan absolutely has to interfere.

This beggar may or may not be a real retard. He may or may not be Tie Chuanjia's friend. But even so, he at least helped out Tie Chuanjia. So Li XunHuan can't let him die.

Besides, Li XunHuan also wanted Tie Chuanjia's information from this man.

Li XunHuan's body dashed forward.

But immediately afterward, he stopped. This start-and-stop

motion was quick as a flash. No one could actually tell that he had moved.

He no longer needed to interfere.

With a loud crack, the green-robed man's shoulder-pole broke in two. He almost lost his balance, and stuttered.

No one saw what exactly broke the shoulder-pole. Everyone's expression changed. They all yelled, "Who dares to interfere?"

A person standing by the edge of a store said calmly, "Me."

Everyone turned their heads toward him, only to see a man wearing a robe white as jade. His hands together behind his back. As he examined a birdcage at the front of the store.

The birds in the cage chirped.

This white-robed man seemed to find birds more amusing than people. He didn't even look towards these vengeful people.

There's a bit of wrinkle by his eyes. But with his dashing eyebrows, his jade-white face, this man is very much a handsome gentleman. No one can tell his age.

The burly green-robed man yelled, "So you broke my shoulder-pole?"

This time, the white-robed man didn't even bother to respond.

The burly green-robed man and the one-eyed married-woman were both furious. They wanted to attack this

gentleman.

Suddenly, that blind fortune-teller said, "Stop."

He then picked up an ingot of silver from the ground, and said coldly, "Although this gentleman broke your shoulder-pole, his ingot can buy you hundreds of these shoulder-poles. You should thank him for his generosity, rather than get angry."

The burly green-robed man looked at the shoulder-pole in his hand, then at the ingot in the blind man's hand. He didn't seem to believe that the tiny ingot could break his shoulder-pole.

The white-robed man suddenly began to laugh. He said, "Good. Looks like you're wiser than those who can actually see. You can keep the silver."

The blind fortune-teller said coldly, "My eyes may be blind, but not my heart. I don't take anything that's not rightfully mine."

He rubbed the ingot in his hands, and said, "A penny worth of silver is enough to buy a new shoulder-pole. This ingot weighs at least ten taels. Surely you don't need to give us this much money."

As he spoke, he rubbed the ingot into a tiny little stick. With a twist from his left hand, a small piece came off. The blind fortune-teller said coldly, "Thanks for this penny's worth of silver. You can keep the rest."

His hand waved, a silver light streaked through the air. The tiny silver stick shot towards the white-robed man. Amazingly, this throw incorporated Wu Dang's 'Double-

Virtue Sword Art’.

As the light streaked, it aimed at five different pressure points in front of the white-robed man’s chest.

Just as the silver stick reached the white-robed man’s chest, he suddenly nipped the stick with his right hand. The two fingers that caught it then calmly came together, and cut off a piece of the stick.

The white-robed man said calmly, “Your sword art is quite good. But just a bit too slow.”

With each word, he took another cut at the stick. After he finished this sentence, fourteen pieces of silver dropped to the ground.

LingLing had been watching from far away. She couldn’t help but gasp, and said, “Is this man’s hand really made of meat?”

Looking at the small piece of silver in the blind man’s hand, everyone’s face turned gray. No one could speak up.

The white-robed man said coldly, “Once I threw out the ingot, it was yours. How come you won’t pick it up?”

The blind fortune-teller suddenly bent down, and picked up the pieces of silver. Then without a single word, he turned around and left.

His companions left with him.

LingLing said with a smile, “At least they know when to leave.”

Li XunHuan remained sullen. He suddenly said, "Do you see that dumpling restaurant?"

LingLing said, "Of course. I've wanted to taste their dumplings for a while now."

Li XunHuan said, "Good. Wait for me over there."

LingLing hesitated for a moment, then said, "You're chasing after that beggar?"

That beggar began to walk forward again. He did not thank the white-robed man, nor looked at anyone else.

It's as if nothing had happened.

Li XunHuan nodded, and said, "I need to ask him something."

LingLing lowered her head, and said, "I can't come with you?"

Li XunHuan said, "No."

LingLing was on the verge of tears. She said, "I know what you're doing. You're going to leave me here alone."

Li XunHuan sighed, and said tenderly, "I want to taste their dumplings too. Why would I not come back?"

LingLing said, "Alright. I trust you. If you lie, I'll wait for you here forever."

The beggar didn't walk very fast.

But Li XunHuan isn't in a hurry to catch him, either. There

are way too many people on this street.

It's never convenient to talk with so many people around. Besides, he realized that the white-robed man had been examining him. As if he's more interesting than those birds.

Li XunHuan also wanted to meet this white-robed man. The whole cutting of silver with his fingers really caught Li XunHuan's attention.

Not many people have this type of ability.

Actually, Li XunHuan had never seen such power with any person's hands. LingLing's description is very apt.

This person's hand does not look like it's made of meat.

Any martial arts expert, upon meeting someone like him, would want to do two things. Either challenge him, or have a drink with him.

On an ordinary day, Li XunHuan would be no exception.

But not today. He has been looking for Tie ChuanJia for a while now. He cannot pass up this lead.

The white-robed man walked toward Li XunHuan. As if wishing to block his path.

Thankfully, the dispersed crowd came to gather around the white-robed man. They wanted to meet this amazing person. Li XunHuan took this opportunity to sneak away.

When he looked up again, that beggar had reached the end of the street. He turned left.

This new road has a lot less people. And is a lot shorter.

Li XunHuan hurried forward, but couldn't see the beggar as he turned. Li XunHuan searched the street following this one. Again, he saw no one.

How could the beggar disappear?

Li XunHuan slowed down, and began to search carefully.

On this street are only back doors of households. A man seemed to be sitting in front of a door. He's rubbing something on his chest.

Before Li XunHuan could see the face, he saw the straw hat.

So that's where the beggar went.

What's he doing?

Li XunHuan didn't want to scare the beggar. So he walked over slowly.

But that beggar was still scared. He quickly tried to hide the item in his hand.

Too bad Li XunHuan's eyes are faster than his hands. He saw that the beggar held a piece of silver. One of the pieces the white-robed man cut off.

Li XunHuan smiled, and said, "May I ask for the name of this friend?"

The beggar stared at him for a moment, then said, "I'm not your friend. You're not my friend. I don't know you. You don't know me."

Li XunHuan still smiled. He said, "I want to ask you about someone. I'm sure you would know him."

Chapter 52: Trap

That beggar shook his head and said, "I don't know anyone. Anyone don't know me. I don't know a single person. Not a single person knows me."

This person must be a bit retarded. Otherwise, why would he make a simple response so wordy?

Just when Li XunHuan wanted to ask him something else, the beggar suddenly ran away.

He ran quite fast, but doesn't look like he knows lightness kung fu. It seems that all beggars can run really fast. It's like an innate skill for them.

Obviously, Li XunHuan could run faster.

As the beggar ran, he said, "What do you want? Do you want to take my silver?"

That beggar then yelled, "Help! Help! A bandit is trying to take my money!"

Thankfully, this is a deserted street. Or Li XunHuan would not know what to do. After all, if one would take money from a beggar, then what would he be? An eighth-rate bandit?

Li XunHuan said, "I'm not going to take your money. But if you can answer some of my questions, you can get an even

bigger ingot of silver.”

That beggar contemplated for a while, then nodded. He said, “Fine. What do you want to know?”

Li XunHuan said, “Do you know a person called Tie ChuanJia?”

The beggar shook his head and said, “I don’t know anyone. Why would a beggar have friends?”

Li XunHuan said, “If so, why did you help him?”

The beggar shook his head again, and said, “I’ve never helped anyone. No one has ever helped me.”

Li XunHuan said, “So you’ve never met a tall, muscular man today, with dark skin and a long beard?”

The beggar thought for a while, then said, “I might have.”

Li XunHuan said, “Where?”

The beggar said, “In the restroom.”

Li XunHuan said, “Restroom?”

The beggar said, “The restroom is where you go take a poop. I was in the middle of a poop, when he suddenly walked in. He asked if I wanted some wine money.”

Li XunHuan said with a smile, “Who wouldn’t want some wine money?”

The beggar said, “But I saw that his clothing looked worse than mine. How could he have money to give me?”

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "The richer a person is, the more he wants to act poor. Don't you know this?"

The beggar also smiled. He said, "You're right. That guy really did have money. Once he showed me his ingot of silver, I asked how I could earn it."

Li XunHuan said, "So what did he say?"

The beggar said, "I thought he'd ask me to do something difficult. But he only wanted to exchange clothes. Then I would lower my head and walk forward. No matter what, I'm supposed to keep my head down."

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "This really is an easy way to make money."

This time he smiled within his heart too. It's nice to know that Tie ChuanJia could now come up with such a nice scheme.

That beggar was even happier. He said, "I know. That's why I figured that guy's brain must have some problems."

Li XunHuan said, "My brain also has some problems. It's even easier to get my silver."

The beggar said, "Really?"

Li XunHuan took out all the silver in his robe. When he left his home, Tie ChuanJia purposely left him some money for basic needs. This is how Li XunHuan managed to live for all these years.

The beggar's eyes brightened considerably at the sight of

the money.

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "If you can lead me to that man with brain problems, I'll give you all these silver."

The beggar immediately said, "Ok. I'll take you to him. But you have to give me the money first."

Li XunHuan held out his hand to give the silver.

He'll give his heart to find Tie ChuanJia.

That beggar was literally drooling at the silver. He reached out, while chuckling, "You must've stole these silver. Why else would you give them away so easily?"

When he took the money, he obviously got to touch Li XunHuan's hands.

Just as his hands touched Li XunHuan's, his five fingers suddenly reached out, and bent down...

Li XunHuan felt a pair of iron hoops entangle his wrist.

Then, he landed face up on the ground.

This beggar's speed is amazing. His simple movements also utilized four powerful martial arts in the process.

Just as his fingers touched Li XunHuan's, he used a powerful orthodox absorption inner power. Anyone caught would never leave his grasp.

Afterwards, he used Wu Dang's seventy-two road Hand-Snatch, snatching one of Li XunHuan's main artery. Anyone snatched this way would lose all his strength.

Then, he used Bone-Separation-Hand to separate Li XunHuan's bones.

Finally, he used a wrestling technique from China's outer regions. Anyone who got picked up, then slammed down, would never be able to get up.

The beggar used all four techniques flawlessly, at peak power.

Even if Li XunHuan realized that he's no ordinary beggar, he wouldn't have believed that the beggar's kung fu would be so amazing. Even if Li XunHuan could figure out that he's a top-level fighter, Li XunHuan would never expect this man to attack without warning.

Li XunHuan had never been this shocked before.

Li XunHuan lied on the ground like a dead fish. He was so dizzy he almost lost consciousness. By the time he finally figured out what's going on, the beggar came to his side. He reached out with one hand and grabbed Li XunHuan's throat. With a big smile on his face.

Who is he? Why did he do this to me?"

Had he long known who I am?

What's his relationship with Tie ChuanJia?

Li XunHuan had so many questions in his mind. But he asked none of them.

In this situation, he figured that it would be better to stay quiet.

But the beggar spoke. He said with a smile, "Why don't you speak?"

Li XunHuan also smiled, and said, "If your neck was grabbed, what could you possibly say?"

The beggar said, "If someone ambushed me like this, then grabbed my neck like this, I'd curse eighteen generations of his ancestors."

Li XunHuan said, "My eyes are not blind, yet could not see that your martial arts are incredible. Even if I were to curse, I'd first curse myself."

That beggar chuckled, shook his head, and said, "You really are an odd fellow. I've never seen anyone like you. If you speak some more, I'd probably blush!"

He suddenly yelled, "This person's not only honorable, but also good person. This type of person annoys me the most. If don't scram out here now, I'm going to leave."

So he had helpers.

Li XunHuan couldn't figure out who his helpers are. Then, the door besides them opened. Seven people came out. Li XunHuan was really shocked to see who they were.

He never thought these people are actually the beggar's helpers.

The first person was the blind fortune-teller.

Then, the one-eyed woman, the burly green-robed man, the guy selling smelly-tofu...

Li XunHuan sighed, and said, "Great plan, great plan. I'm very impressed."

The blind man said coldly, "You're too kind."

Li XunHuan said, "So this had absolutely nothing to do with Tie ChuanJia."

The blind man said, "That's not totally true, except..."

The beggar cut in, "Except I never saw Tie ChuanJia, nor know who he is. That show we just put up was for you."

Li XunHuan smiled bitterly, and said, "And an excellent show it was."

The blind man said, "Otherwise, how could we have fooled Li Tan Hua?"

Li XunHuan said, "Oh, so you knew who I am, and knew that I came into this city."

The blind man said, "Someone saw you even before you entered this city."

Li XunHuan said, "But how come you would recognize me?"

The blind man said, "We might not recognize you, but someone else did."

Li XunHuan said, "If you all don't know me, then why put on this show for me?"

The blind man said, "Because of Tie ChuanJia!"

His expression suddenly turned very venomous, as he

continued, "We've been searching him for a while now. But we couldn't find him. However, if he knew that Li Tan Hua is with us, he'll come looking for us."

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "What if he doesn't come?"

The blind man said coldly, "You'll never ignore him in time of need, just as he won't ignore you in time of need. We're certain that he'll arrive, or we wouldn't have used this plan."

Li XunHuan said, "I must applaud you for this brilliant plan."

The blind man said, "If I were clever enough to come up with this plan, then perhaps I wouldn't be blind today."

Li XunHuan said, "You didn't come up with this plan?"

The blind man said, "No."

The beggar said, "I didn't come up with this plan either. I have a strange problem. Every time I think about hurting others, my head starts to hurt."

Li XunHuan said, "So someone else is behind all this..."

The blind man said, "You don't have to ask for his name. Because you'll see him soon enough."

He sealed Li XunHuan's pressure point with his staff, and added coldly, "Once you see him, you might feel that living in this world is pointless, and that death might be a better alternative."

* * *

The door is quite small. The wall is quite high.

No sound came from inside the courtyard.

Then came a hearty laugh, as someone said, "So have you already managed to invite my brother here?"

Li XunHuan froze upon hearing this voice.

This is Long Xiao4Yun's voice.

So he was the mastermind.

The blind man said coldly, "Yes, we've managed to invite Li Tan Hua here."

Before he finished, a man stepped through the door. He is none other than Long Xiao4Yun.

When he came out, he immediately grabbed Li XunHuan's hands, and said, "It has been two years, brother. I've been thinking of you everyday."

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "If big brother wants to see me, why didn't you just say so? No need to go through this hassle."

The beggar suddenly began to laugh. He said, "Great! Great! I am awed by your composure. I can't believe you can still keep calm in this situation."

Long Xiao4Yun seemingly turned deaf, as if he didn't hear anything these people said. Long Xiao4Yun still held on to Li XunHuan's hands, and said, "I knew you were going to come. So I prepared some excellent wine for you."

He helped Li XunHuan up, then said to the others, "Come,

please join us in this reunion of sworn brothers.”

The blind man did not move.

None of his brothers moved either.

Long Xiao4Yun said with a smile, “Oh, so you can’t join us?”
The blind man said, “We only did all this for Tie ChuanJia.
Now we’ve now done our part. When Tie ChuanJia shows up,
be sure to tell us.”

His face then sank, and said coldly, “As for Fourth Master
Long’s wine, I would not dare touch. After all, I’m certainly
not worthy to be Fourth Master Long’s friend.”

Without further words, he walked away.

The table in the courtyard is full of wine.

The wine-dishes are exquisite. The wines are all famous
brands.

That beggar didn’t seem to care for courtesy. He
immediately sat in a chair and said, “To be honest, I wanted
to leave too. But I can’t let these good food and wine go to
waste.”

He raised a cup of wine towards Li XunHuan and said, “You
should drink some too. No point in not drinking this guy’s
wine. Of course, not much point in drinking his wine either.”

Long Xiao4Yun said, “This is Hero Hu. Brother, I do not
believe you have met..”

Li XunHuan said, “Hero Hu? Is your given name ‘BuGui’?”

That beggar said with a smile, "That's right. Hu BuGui is I! You might call me a hero, but in your heart, I'm sure you must be thinking, 'So this is Crazy Hu. No wonder he acts like a lunatic.' Am I right?"

Li XunHuan chuckled, and said, "You're right."

Hu BuGui laughed, and said, "You really are an odd person, probably a lunatic too. If you weren't crazy, how could you become friends with someone like Long Xiao4Yun?"

Li XunHuan just smiled.

Hu BuGui said, "But don't think I'm his friend too. I only helped him because I owe him a favor. After this task, I'll never have anything to do with him again."

He suddenly slapped the table, and added, "But this task was way too devious, really lacks virtue. So embarrassing, so shameful, so not right, so despicable..."

As he spoke, he slapped himself on the cheek seventeen or eighteen times. Then he began to cry on the table. Long Xiao4Yun seemed to be familiar with his antics, and wasn't bothered.

But Li XunHuan felt a bit remorseful. He said, "No matter what, even if I were fully alert, I couldn't have dodged Brother Hu's last move."

Hu BuGui slapped the table again, and said angrily, "That's a bunch of crap! Without any tricks, how could I manage to touch you? I harmed you, yet you try to comfort me. What's this all about?"

Li XunHuan didn't know how to respond.

Hu BuGui said, "I have lots of mood swings, get angry for no reason, doesn't know the difference between right and wrong, always doing things backward, cry when I want, laugh when I want... I'm really just a load of crap."

He suddenly glared at Long Xiao4Yun and said, "But you're a bigger piece of crap than I am. And your son is an even bigger piece of crap than you. He has two feet, yet has to act like a dog, crawling under a table. Does he want to pick bones down there?"

Long Xiao4Yun blushed. He looked down, only to find Long Xiao3Yun crawling by the table. He held a dagger, and had crawled next to Li XunHuan.

Long Xiao4Yun grabbed him and held him up. Then said with a sullen face, "What do you think you're doing?"

Long Xiao3Yun's face was very calm. He said, "You've once said that a man should know who his friends and enemies are, right?"

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Yes."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Isn't it also true in the martial world, that one must try to obtain revenge, and must repay gratitude? He destroyed my kung fu, so I'm forever crippled. Asking for his two legs is certainly not too much."

Long Xiao4Yun's face turned pale. He said, "So you want revenge?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Yes."

Long Xiao4Yun said loudly, "Do you know who he is?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "I just know that he is my enemy..."

Before he could finish this sentence, Long Xiao4Yun gave him a slap on the face, and yelled angrily, "But do you know that he's also your dad's sworn brother? He has the right to teach you a lesson. How could you even think about revenge? How could you be so discourteous to him?"

After getting scolded, Long Xiao3Yun suddenly got on his knees in front of Li XunHuan. He said, "I'm sorry. I've learned my lesson. Uncle Li, please forgive your nephew."

Li XunHuan didn't know what to say. But Hu BuGui had already jumped up, yelling, "Oh lord, I can't stand these two. Oh, how I wish to vomit right now."

As he yelled, he ran out the door.

Chapter 53: Deceit

Long Xiao4Yun forced a chuckle, and said, "A person might have a wrong name, but never a wrong nickname. A person might be dumb as an ox, but have a name called 'bright'. But if a person's nickname is 'crazy', then he must be crazy."

Li XunHuan originally didn't want to say anything. But he couldn't help but comment, "But if someone is too intelligent, knows too much, then he might also slowly turn into a lunatic."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Really?"

Li XunHuan said, "Because by that time, he might find that life is better as a lunatic. So for some people, their biggest agony is that they want to be crazy, but can't."

Long Xiao4Yun smiled. He said, "Thankfully, I'm not that smart. So I'll never have this sort of agony."

Of course he'll never have this type of agony. He'd never agonize over anything.

Because he'd give his agony to others.

Li XunHuan thought for a long time. Then he lowered his head, sipping the wine slowly.

Long Xiao4Yun watched, waiting.

He knew that when Li XunHuan drank slowly, he must have something important to say.

After a long time, Li XunHuan raised his head again, and said, "Big brother..."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Yes?"

Li XunHuan said, "There's something in my heart, that I want to say. But I don't know if I should say it."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Go ahead."

Li XunHuan said, "No matter what, we've been friends for many years."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Not friends, sworn brothers."

Li XunHuan said, "I'm sure you know what type of a person I am."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Yes..."

Although he only said a single word, Long Xiao4Yun said it very slowly. The word also carried a hint of shame.

He is, after all, still a person.

Any person would at least have some humanity in him.

Li XunHuan said, "Therefore, if you wanted me to do something, you should simply tell me. If its something I can do, I'll certainly do it."

Long Xiao4Yun slowly raised his wine cup, as if wishing to

block his own face.

Li XunHuan has done way too much for him.

After a long time, he let out a deep sigh, and said, "I know what you mean. But... time can change many things."

Li XunHuan's face looked more and more gloomy. He said, "I know there's some misunderstanding between us..."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Misunderstanding?"

Li XunHuan said, "Right, misunderstanding. But on some matters, big brother, you should not have misunderstood me."

Long Xiao4Yun's face turned incredibly pale. After a long time, he finally said, "But on one single matter, there's absolutely no misunderstanding involved."

Li XunHuan asked, "Which matter?"

Right after he spoke, Li XunHuan already regretted these words.

He should already know the answer. Even worse, Long Xiao3Yun seemed to know that his father's about to speak something important. He quietly left.

Long Xiao4Yun stayed silent for a long time, before he said, "I know you've been in agony these past years."

Li XunHuan said, "Most people lives in agony."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "But your agony is worse than most people's."

Li XunHuan said, “Huh?”

Long Xiao4Yun said, “Because you gave away the woman you love the most. To another man, to be his wife.”

Some wine spilled out, because Li XunHuan’s hands were shaking.

Long Xiao4Yun said, “But your agony isn’t deep enough. Because when someone felt that he has sacrificed himself for another, he would feel very bighearted. This will lessen his agony.”

These words are very sharp, but also sort of reasonable.

Of course, this doesn’t apply to every situation.

Long Xiao4Yun’s hands are also shaking. He said, “Perhaps, you still don’t know the real meaning of agony.”

Li XunHuan said, “Perhaps...”

Long Xiao4Yun said, “When a man finds out that his wife was given to him by someone else, and his wife still loves that person... That is the most painful agony in the world!”

This is true.

Not only is this great agony, but it’s also great humiliation.

Normally, men would rather die than say something like this. Because it’s too painful to say such a thing!

No one would want to hurt himself, humiliate himself, this badly.

Yet Long Xiao4Yun just said it. He said it to Li XunHuan.

Li XunHuan's heart sunk.

He realized two things from these words. First: Long Xiao4Yun is also in a great deal of agony. That's why he changed, changed so dramatically. Put someone else in his shoes, and that person would probably also change.

Li XunHuan suddenly felt pity for Long Xiao4Yun.

Second: Since Long Xiao4Yun said these to him, he's not likely going to live long!

Li XunHuan had never cared much about life and death.

But can he afford to die now?

They did not speak much.
But each word had come out slowly, after much thinking,
much pause.

It's a cloudy day. It's getting late.

So although it's not night yet, the sky is already very dark.

Long Xiao4Yun's expression is darker than the sky.

He lifted the wine cup, then up it down. Lifted it up again,
and then put it down...

It's not that he can't drink wine. Rather, he doesn't want to drink the wine. Because he found that when a person drinks, he becomes more impulsive. Even the calmest person, when he becomes impulsive, would make decisions based on

feelings.

After a long time, Long Xiao4Yun finally said, "I should not have said these words today."

Li XunHuan said with a smile, "Everyone has said things they did not want to say. It's part of being human."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "I didn't invite you here to say these things."

Li XunHuan said, "I know."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Do you know why I invited you here?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

For the first time, Long Xiao4Yun was surprised. He said, "You really know?"

Li XunHuan said, "I do."

Li XunHuan didn't wait for Long Xiao4Yun to ask again, and continued, "Do you really think there's treasure in Happy Cloud Manor?"

Long Xiao4Yun thought for a long time, before responding, "Yes."

Li XunHuan said, "Where do you think it's at?"

Long Xiao4Yun said, "You should know the place."

Li XunHuan said, "I've always had this odd problem."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "What problem?"

Li XunHuan said, "My problem is, I know all the things I shouldn't know. Yet I don't know anything that I should know."

Long Xiao4Yun's mouth closed.

Li XunHuan said, "Actually, you should've already figured it out. That this whole treasure thing is a charade..."

Long Xiao4Yun cut him off, and said, "I trust you. Because you would not lie to me."

He looked at Li XunHuan intently, and added, "If there's one person I can trust in this world, it's you. If I still have one friend left in this world, it's you! Everything else I've said might be a lie. But this time, I'm definitely speaking the truth."

Li XunHuan also looked at Long Xiao4Yun intently. He sighed deeply, and said, "I believe you, because..."

He stopped talking, because he began to cough.

When he stopped coughing, Long Xiao4Yun continued his sentence, said, "You believe me, because you realize that you are no longer useful to me. So I have no reason to mislead you. Right?"

Li XunHuan answered this question with his silence.

Long Xiao4Yun stood up, and paced around the table.

There's no other sound in the courtyard. His footsteps became heavier and heavier. As if he felt uneasy... Or perhaps he only wants Li XunHuan to think this.

Then, he stopped. He stopped in front of Li XunHuan, and said, "You must think that I'm going to kill you."

Li XunHuan's expression is still of total calm, unbelievable calm. He said calmly, "No matter what you do to me, I won't blame you."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "But I won't kill you."

Li XunHuan, "I know."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Of course you do. You understand me quite well."

He suddenly became very excited, as he continued, "Because even if I kill you, I still cannot capture her heart. I can only make her hate me more."

Li XunHuan took a deep breath, and said, "There are many things in life that's beyond one's control."

Beyond one's control.

Such a simple phrase. Yet it's one of the most painful things in life.

When you meet it, you can't fight it, can't struggle against it. No matter what you do, what you try, it's still beyond your control.

Long Xiao4Yun tightened his fist, and said, "I can't kill you, but that doesn't mean I'm letting you go."

Li XunHuan nodded.

Because I'm still useful to you alive.

But he didn't say these words.

No matter how Long Xiao4Yun hurt him, betray him, he still would not say a single word that would hurt Long Xiao4Yun.

Long Xiao4Yun tightened his fists even more. Because only in front of Li XunHuan, could he feel so insignificant, so minute.

That's why Li XunHuan's magnificent friendship not only didn't soften his heart, but rather angered him further.

He glared at Li XunHuan, and said, "I'm taking you to see someone. This person had wanted to see you for some time now. Perhaps... you would like to see him too.

* * *

It's a big room.

Despite its size, the room has only one window. A very small window, very high up.

The window is open. Yet you cannot see the scenery outside.

The door is small. If a person has wide shoulders, then he had to walk through the door sideways.

The door is also open.

There's white paint on the wall. The paint is very thick. As if so no one could see if this is a stone wall, a dirt wall, or an iron wall.

There are two beds in the corner.

Wooden beds.

The bed sheets are very clean, but very simple.

In addition to the beds, there's only a big table in the room.

The table is filled with different account books, files, dossiers.

One person stood in front of the table. Occasionally, he'd make some marks on the account books with his brush. Sometimes, a smile would appear on the corner of his mouth.

He's standing!

He felt that if someone sits down, he'd become relaxed. If a person becomes relaxed, then he would be too prone to error.

He's never relaxed.

He's never made an error.

He had never lost.

There's someone else behind him.

This person stood even straighter, like a spear.

He just stood there. No one knew for how long. He didn't so much as lift a finger.

A mosquito came in somehow. It flew around.

His eyes didn't even blink.

The mosquito landed on his nose, and began to suck blood.

He still didn't move.

It's as if he has no feelings. He feels no pain, no joy.

He might not even know why he's alive.

Chapter 54: The Deal

Obviously, these two people are Jin WuMing and ShangGuan JinHong. One might never find a third person like them.

To think, the richest, most famous, most powerful Golden Money Clan's leader, would live in such a simple place. No one could possibly imagine this.

Because in their eyes, money is just a tool. Women are also tools. Every single luxury in the world is a tool for them. They don't care for any of that. They only care about power. Power. Other than power, they need nothing. They live for power, and just might die for power.

It's very quiet. Other than sounds of flipping books, there's only silence. The candlelight shined. No one knows how long they've been working here, standing here. One can only see light turn into dark, and dark turn back into light. It seems as if they're never tired, never hungry. At this moment, someone knocked by the door. It's just one knock, and very light.

ShangGuan JinHong's hands did not stop moving, nor did he raise his head.

Jin WuMing said, "Who?"

The man outside said, "One seventy-nine."

Jin WuMing said, "What do you want?"

The man outside said, "Someone wants to see the clan leader."

Jin WuMing said, "Who?"

The man outside said, "He won't say his name."

Jin WuMing said, "Why does he want to see the clan leader?"

The man outside said, "He said he'll tell the clan leader upon seeing him."

Jin WuMing stopped talking.

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly said, "Where is he?"

The man outside said, "In the front courtyard."

ShangGuan JinHong's hands still turned the pages. He didn't even raise his head when he said, "Kill him!"

The man outside said, "Yes."

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly asked, "Who escorted him here?"

The man outside said, "The eighth helmsman, Xiang Song."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Kill Xiang Song too!"

The man outside said, "Yes."

Jin WuMing said, "I'll go!"

When he spoke these words, his foot is already out the door, and left in a flash. When it comes to killing, Jin WuMing is always enthusiastic. Besides, Xiang Song's nickname is 'Wind and Rain Meteors'. His pair of Meteor Hammer ranks number nineteenth on the Book of Weapons. It's not easy to kill him.

Who did he escort to see ShangGuan JinHong? What this person's reason for coming? Apparently, ShangGuan JinHong didn't seem to be curious at all.

This man really has no humanity in him.

His head never rose. His hand never stopped moving.

The door opened. Jin WuMing returned.

ShangGuan JinHong didn't ask him "Did he die?"

Because Jin WuMing never fails when it comes to killing.

ShangGuan JinHong only said, "Go! If Xiang Song did not retaliate, give his family ten thousand taels of gold. If he did retaliate, kill his whole family."

Jin WuMing said, "I didn't kill him."

ShangGuan JinHong finally raised his head, and glared at Jin WuMing.

Jin WuMing's face is still without an expression. He said, "Because the person he escorted, I can't kill."

ShangGuan JinHong yelled, "Anyone can be killed. Why not him?"

Jin WuMing said, "I don't kill children."

ShangGuan JinHong froze for a moment. He slowly lowered his brush, and said, "Are you telling me, that a child wants to see me?"

Jin WuMing said, "Yes."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "What kind of a child?"

Jin WuMing said, "A crippled child."

Rays shot out of ShangGuan JinHong's eyes. He thought for a while, before he said, "Bring him in!"

A child would dare come see ShangGuan JinHong? Not even ShangGuan JinHong himself would believe it. This child isn't just fearless, he must be crazy.

Yet this person really is a child.

His face is pure white, without a hint of life.

He didn't carry the glow of a child either, but rather the sullenness of an adult.

He walked very slowly, his back a bit bent.

This child looks like an old man.

This child is none other than Long Xiao3Yun.

Anyone who saw Long Xiao3Yun would examine him in detail.

ShangGuan JinHong is no exception.

His eyes glared at Long Xiao3Yun's face.

Everyone ShangGuan JinHong had glared this way, either began to shake. Or at least feel their legs giving out.

Long Xiao3Yun is an exception.

He slowly came in, bowed courteously, and said, "My name is Long Xiao3Yun, here to pay respects to Clan Leader."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Long Xiao3Yun? Who is Long Xiao4Yun to you?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "He's my father."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Did your father tell you to come?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Yes."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Why didn't he come himself."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "If he had come, it's uncertain if he'd get to meet clan leader. Instead, there's a good chance he'd die instead."

ShangGuan JinHong said loudly, "You think I won't kill you?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "I'm just a child. My life is already within your hands. It's not that you won't kill me, but rather I'm not worth your time to kill."

ShangGuan JinHong's face actually turned more pleasant. He said, "You might be young, might be sick. But you are quite brave."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "When someone needs to ask for something, he would naturally become a lot braver."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Great words."

He suddenly chuckled at Jin WuMing, and said, "If you only heard him speak, would you be able to tell if he's child?"

Although his head is facing down, Long Xiao3Yun was very observant of these two people. He found their relationship very interesting.

ShangGuan JinHong finally said, "Your biggest strength is that you never speak. But your biggest weakness is that you never hear others speak."

Jin WuMing didn't even care to respond.

After a long time, ShangGuan JinHong finally said, "What do you want?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "There are many ways to say everything. I can say my request in a roundabout way. But clan leader's time is precious. So I should speak in the most direct manner, the shortest way."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Great. To those who are too wordy, I only have one way to cure their problems. That is by cutting off their throats."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "I came to make a deal."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "A deal?"

His face turned cold again, and said, "Others have tried to make deals with me. Do you know what I did to them?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "I am listening."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "I used only one way to take care of them. That's by killing them!"

Long Xiao3Yun's expression did not change. He said calmly, "But this deal is different. Or I would not dare come."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "A deal is a deal. What's so different about this one?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "This deal can only benefit clan leader."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Really?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Clan leader is world-renowned. You have unlimited wealth. You can get anything you want in the world."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Exactly. Which is why I don't make deals."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "But there is one thing in this world, that clan leader might not be able to obtain."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Really?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "This item isn't really worth all that much. But his value for clan leader is different."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "What item are you talking about?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "The life of Li XunHuan!"

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly became quite passionate. He asked, "What did you say?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "We have control of Li XunHuan's life. If clan leader agrees to the deal, I can bring him anytime you wish."

ShangGuan JinHong began to think.

After a long time, until his face turned cold again, he said, "Li XunHuan's worth nothing. I do not care for him at all."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "If so, I shall take my leave."

He didn't say another word, turned around, and began to walk away.

Long Xiao3Yun slowly walked to the door. He opened it.

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly said, "Hold on."

A smug smile appeared on Long Xiao3Yun's face. But by the time he turned around, his face only contained respect and submissiveness. He bowed and said, "What else does clan leader ask of me?"

ShangGuan JinHong did not look at him. He only looked at the candlelight on the table, and said, "What do you want to exchange for Li XunHuan's life?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Father has long heard of clan leader's fame. He felt sad never to have met clan leader."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "This is useless crap. Get to the point."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Father only wishes, in front of the

heroes in the world, to become your sworn brother.”

Rage shot out of ShangGuan JinHong’s eyes, but it quickly disappeared. He said calmly, “It seems as if Long Xiao4Yun is quite a clever person. Too bad he would make such a stupid request.”

Long Xiao3Yun said, “Maybe so, but sometimes the stupidest ways are the most effective ways.”

ShangGuan JinHong said, “You’re certain that I will accept this deal?”

Long Xiao3Yun said, “If I weren’t, why risk my life to come here?”

ShangGuan JinHong said, “You’re Long Xiao4Yun’s only child, right?”

Long Xiao3Yun said, “Yes.”

ShangGuan JinHong said, “If so, he should not have sent you.”

Long Xiao3Yun said, “But if he chose anyone else, that person would not have met clan leader.”

ShangGuan JinHong said, “This was originally just a deal. But now that you’re here, the situation has changed.”

Long Xiao3Yun said, “You think you use me to compel father to give you Li XunHuan, right?”

ShangGuan JinHong said, “Exactly.”

Long Xiao3Yun suddenly chuckled, and said, “Clan leader

might be all-knowing, but you're wrong about father."

ShangGuan JinHong snickered, and said, "You mean he'd rather see me kill you, than to give me Li XunHuan?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Exactly."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "You mean he's not human?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "He is human. But there are many different types of humans."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Which type is he?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "The same as you. Anything can be used, be sacrificed, to achieve a goal."

ShangGuan JinHong closed his mouth.

After a long time, he finally said, "For the past twenty years, no one has ever spoke to me this way."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Because of this, I can speak such words in front of you. To move you with these words."

ShangGuan JinHong glared at him, and said, "If you don't agree, would you actually let Li XunHuan go?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Yes."

ShangGuan JinHong let out a cold laugh, and said, "You're not afraid that he might seek revenge?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "He's a different type of a person. He'd never do such a thing."

He laughed, and continued, "If he were, he'd never be in his current situation."

ShangGuan JinHong yelled, "Even if you let him go, do you really think I can't kill him myself?"

Long Xiao3Yun said calmly, "Little Li's Flying Dagger never misses."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "You think I can't dodge his dagger?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "At least you're not certain, right?"

ShangGuan JinHong let out a humph.

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Considering clan leader's position and achievements, why take such a needless risk?"

ShangGuan JinHong did not respond.

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Besides, although father's martial arts and fame are only mediocre, he's one of the cleverest person in the world. Clan leader will surely benefit from having such a sworn brother."

ShangGuan JinHong pondered for a while, when he suddenly asked, "Li XunHuan is his sworn brother, right?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Yes."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "If he can betray Li XunHuan, why can't he betray me?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Because clan leader is not Li XunHuan."

ShangGuan JinHong laughed. He said, "You're right. Even if Long Xiao4Yun has the guts to betray me, he doesn't have the means."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Does this mean that clan leader has agreed?"

ShangGuan JinHong stopped his laughter, and said, "How do I know that you have Li XunHuan?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "If clan leader would just send out notices to heroes of the world, inviting them to come to watch father and clan leader become sworn brothers..."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "You think they have the courage to come?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "That doesn't matter. Just as long as everyone knows about it."

ShangGuan JinHong smirked, and said, "Very nice plan."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "I know clan leader would need more time to think. I'll be living at the 'Lucky Cloud Hotel', waiting for clan leader's response."

He then added, "Once the notices are sent, and are received, I'll escort Li XunHuan here."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Escort him here... Humph, you and your father probably don't have this ability."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Of course I realize this. If Shaolin's Reverend XinMei and Seventh Master Tian can't do something, what chance do I have? However..."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Keep going."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "If Mr. Jin could help with the escort, then there would be no problems."

ShangGuan JinHong did not respond.

Jin WuMing suddenly said, "I'll go."

For the first time, a smile appeared on Long Xiao3Yun's face. He got on his knees and said, "Thank you."

ShangGuan JinHong remained silent for a long time, before he suddenly asked, "Is your kung fu forever destroyed? The person who did this is Li XunHuan?"

Long Xiao3Yun's face turned livid. He lowered his head further and said, "Yes."

ShangGuan JinHong looked at his face, and asked, "You hate him?"

Long Xiao3Yun thought for a long time, before he finally answered, "Yes."

ShangGuan JinHong said, "Actually, not only should you not hate him, you should thank him."

Long Xiao3Yun raised his head a tiny bit. He said, "Thank him?"

ShangGuan JinHong said coldly, "If he hadn't destroyed your kung fu, you would've died today in this room."

Long Xiao3Yun's head lowered further back down.

ShangGuan JinHong said, "You already so devious at such a young age. In twenty years, you can actually be a match for me. How can let you live if you weren't crippled?"

Long Xiao3Yun bit his teeth hard. So hard his gums began to bleed.

But his head remained lowered.

Chapter 55: The Prostitute

Darkness.

In the darkness there's heavy breathing, moaning...

Then there's simply silence.

After a long, long time, a woman's voice can be heard. She whispered, "You know, I've always wanted to ask you this one question."

This woman's voice is sweet and seductive. If a man doesn't want to be seduced by this voice, he'd have to turn deaf.

A man spoke, "Why haven't you asked?"

This man's voice is very peculiar. If you're near him, his voice seems to come far away. If you're far away, his voice seems to be next to you.

The woman said, "Are you really a man? Or made out of iron?"

The man said, "You can't tell?"

The woman's voice became even sweeter. She said, "If you're a man, then why won't you ever get tired?"

The man said, "You need to rest?"

The woman couldn't help but chuckle. She said, "You think I can't keep up? Why don't we try again?"

The man said, "Not now!"

The woman said, "Why?"

The man said, "Because I need you to do something for me."

The woman said, "I'll do anything you ask."

The man said, "Good. Now go kill Ah Fei."

The woman seemingly froze. After a moment, she sighed, and said, "I told you already. It's not time to kill him yet."

The man said, "Now is the time."

The woman said, "Why? Is Li XunHuan dead?"

The man said, "Not yet, but he will be very soon."

The woman said, "Where... where is he?"

The man said, "In the palms of my hands."

The woman smiled and said, "I've been with you every single night the past nights. How did you manage to catch him? Can you split in two?"

The man said, "If I want something, I don't have to get it myself. Someone will bring it to me."

The woman said, "Who brought him to you? Who can possibly capture Li XunHuan?"

The man said, "Long Xiao4Yun."

The woman gasped, then smiled. She said, "Of course he must be Long Xiao4Yun. Only Li XunHuan's best friend can hurt him. He's seemingly impervious to all weapons, except emotion.

The man said coldly, "You seem to understand him quite well."

The woman laughed, and said, "I tend to know my enemies much better than my friends. For example, I don't understand you at all."

She quickly changed the subject, and continued, "I know Long Xiao4Yun. There's no way he would give Li XunHuan to you for no reason."

The man said, "Really?"

The woman said, "He doesn't want to kill Li XunHuan himself. So he's using you to do the deed."

The man said, "You think that's his only goal?"

The woman said, "What else would he want?"

The man said, "He wants to be my sworn brother."

The woman sighed, and said, "Well, he certainly knows how to bargain. So you agreed to his request?"

The man said, "Yes."

The woman said, "You haven't figured out that he's just using you?"

The man snickered.

He suddenly let out a cold laugh, and said, "Too bad his plan is too naïve."

The woman said, "Too naïve?"

The man said, "He thinks that if he's my sworn brother, then I won't hurt him. Humph, even if he were my blood brother, it still would make no difference."

The woman chuckled, and said, "You're right. If he can betray Li XunHuan, surely you can betray him."

The man said, "Although Long Xiao4Yun is worth nothing in my eyes. His son is quite a character."

The woman said, "You've seen that little devil?"

The man said, "Long Xiao4Yun didn't come to meet me. His son came."

The woman sighed, and said, "You're right. His son really is mature little devil."

The man thought for a moment, then suddenly said, "You can go now."

The woman said, "You don't want to keep my a while longer?"

The man said, "No."

The woman said tenderly, "All other men hesitates when they have to part with me. They want to be with me for as long as possible. Only you. Only you would immediately send me away after we finish our task."

The man said coldly, "That's because I'm not these other men. Nor am I your friend. We're just using each other. Since we both know this, why put on the pretense of being friendly?"

The room is very dark. But there's light outside.

Dim, starlight.

Under the starlight stood a person. He stood outside the room. His dead, gray eyes looked into the distance. His body looked like a statue.

Yet now, there's an agony in those dead, gray eyes.

He couldn't tolerate standing here.

He couldn't tolerate the sounds in that room.

Yet he must tolerate.

In this life, he's only faithful to one person... ShangGuan JinHong.

His life, even his soul, belongs to ShangGuan JinHong.

The door opened.

A shadow appeared behind him.

Starlight shined on her face. Beauty, splendor, innocence... no matter who saw her, would not believe what she had just done.

A goddess on the outside, a devil on the inside... Who else but Lin XianEr?

Jin WuMing did not turn around.

Lin XianEr circled in front of him, staring at him.

Her eyes are as tender as the light from the star.

Jin WuMing's gaze remained on the distant darkness, as if she doesn't even exist.

Lin XianEr's hands reached up onto his shoulders, caressing his body.

Jin WuMing did not respond. It's as if his whole body's numb.

Lin XianEr smiled. She said tenderly, "Thank you for guarding the door for us. When I know that you're outside, I feel so safe, feel so much more excited to do anything."

She then put her mouth next to his ear, and suddenly whispered, "I'll also tell you a secret. He might be a bit old, but still great in bed. Perhaps this is because he has more experience than others."

She then walked away, with a bright smile on her face.

Jin WuMing still did not move. But every single one of his muscles shook.

* * *

Lucky Cloud Hotel is the biggest hotel in the city. It's where the rich lavishes their money.

If a guest has enough money, he can enjoy all the luxuries he wants without ever leaving his room.

Here, if you simply ask, someone will bring you the best dishes, the best singers and dancers, and the best prostitute to your room.

Here, all the rooms are closed in the daytime, as if the whole place is deserted.

But at night, all the doors open.

First you'll hear the sound of rinsing water. Then there's the yelling of the busboys, the words of thanks from the waiters, the laughter of woman and tender greetings like 'Master Zhang', or 'Third Master Wang'.

Then you'd hear sounds of people's cups clashing for toasts, girls singing and sweet laughter, sounds of bragging by men...

This place, in the late night, you'll hear all sorts of inappropriate sounds.

Except one room, where there's no sound.

Rarely, there would be one or two short moans, painful screams.

This room's door is always closed.

At every night at dusk, a girl would be sent in. These girls

are all very beautiful, very young, and very tender.

When they enter the room, they all had dressed up beautifully, cleanly. There would be big smiles on their faces. Although these smiles are artificial, they are still very stimulating.

But when they leave the next morning, everything's different.

The clean and organized hair, would become shriveled, some even yanked off. The bright, shiny eyes, would become dim and expressionless.

The dazzling, colorful faces, would crumple, with tears coming down.

Seven days. The same thing for the past seven days.

At first, no one noticed. But then people started to become aware of it.

At a place where people seek happiness, they notice this sort of things.

So people began to chatter.
Everyone was surprised at the answer.

"The person in that room, is actually a not fully matured boy!"

When asked about it, the girls would begin to shake. Tears would fall from their eyes, unwilling to give any information.

When pressured, they would only say, "He's not human... he's not human."

It's dusk again.

The door for this room is still closed.

To the opposite of the door is a window. A pale boy sat by the window, looking at the scenery outside. For a long, long time, he did not move.

Occasionally, a venomous glow would appear in his eyes.

Long Xiao3Yun.

The dishes on the table are virtually untouched.

He eats very little. He's waiting. Waiting for bigger enjoyments. He's never cared much for eating. He felt that if a person eats too much, his head would get stuffed.

Finally, there's a knock on the door.

Long Xiao3Yun did not turn. He only said coldly, "The door's unlocked. Come in."

The door opened. The footsteps are light, slow.

Another weak, young girl, and a bit shy too.

This is Long Xiao3Yun's favorite type of girl.

Because he's so weak physically, he wants to act 'strong'. Only in front of these girls can he act 'strong'.

The footstep stopped by the table.

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Has the person who brought you here

told you the price?”

That girl answered, “Yes.”

Long Xiao3Yun said, “This price is three times the normal price, right?”

That girl answered, “Yes.”

Long Xiao3Yun said, “So you’re going to listen to me. You won’t put up any resistance, right?”

That girl said, “Right.”

Long Xiao3Yun said, “Good. Now take off your clothes. All of them.”

That girl did not move. After a while, she suddenly said, “You’re not going to watch me take off my clothes?”

This voice was very sweet, surprisingly sweet.

Long Xiao3Yun seemingly froze.

That girl laughed sweetly, and said, “You know, it’s very enjoyable to watch girls take off their clothes. Why don’t you try it?”

Long Xiao3Yun realized that something’s wrong. He turned around.

Then he froze.

This ‘girl’ is actually Lin XianEr!

Lin XianEr carried her goddess-like smile.

Long Xiao3Yun seemingly turned into a statue.

But that lasted for only a moment. He then quickly laughed, and stood up, said, "So Auntie Lin's here to joke with me."

Lin XianEr said seductively, "You're still calling me auntie?"

Long Xiao3Yun said with a smile, "Auntie is always auntie."

Lin XianEr said, "But you're an adult now, right?"

She sighed lightly, and scolded, "I just left for three years, and you've grown up so fast."

Long Xiao3Yun quickly evaded this topic, and said, "We never were able to find Auntie Lin these past three years."

Lin XianEr said, "But I know a lot about you. I heard... that towards girls, you're much better than even those much older than you."

Long Xiao3Yun shyly lowered his head and said, "But in front of Auntie Lin, I'm still a kid."

Lin XianEr raised her eyebrows. She pouted, "You still call me auntie? Am I really that old?"

Lin XianEr stood right in front of him, very leisurely. But that grace, that expression, that unspeakable seductiveness, you won't find in any other woman.

Long Xiao3Yun's eyes glowed.

Lin XianEr bit her lips, and said, "I heard you like little girls. But I... I'm just an old hag."

Long Xiao3Yun felt his heart beating rapidly. He couldn't help but say, "You're not old at all."

Lin XianEr said, "Really?"

Long Xiao3Yun said, "If someone said you're old, he must be an idiot, or blind."

Lin XianEr chuckled, and said, "Are you an idiot? Are you blind?"

Long Xiao3Yun's obviously not an idiot, nor blind.

When Lin XianEr left him, she felt quite painful.

This 'child' is neither a child, nor an idiot, because he's a lunatic!

A scary lunatic.

Even Lin XianEr had never seen such a lunatic.

Yet in her eyes, one can see a satisfied glow.

She finally got the information she's seeking.

When it comes to men, she has never failed. Whether that man's an idiot, a gentleman, or a lunatic!

Although it's nearly dawn, there are still people drinking.

A man was yelling, "If you're going to drink, drink until dawn, until you fall on the ground..." It seems that before he could finish this sentence, he already fell to the ground.

Upon hearing these words, Lin XianEr suddenly remembered a person.

She could almost hear his cough.

When she thinks about this person, she'd be filled with rage.

Because she knew that she could conquer all the man in the world, but never him.

Because she could not have him, she must destroy him!

If she can't have someone, no one else can.

She bit her teeth, and thought, "Although I want you dead, I can't let you die now. Especially can't let you die in ShangGuan JinHong's hands. Otherwise, there's nothing in this world that can stop him.

"But one day, you'll die in my hands. Die slowly... oh very slowly..."

Chapter 56: Sword out of the Sheath

Sword.

A very thin sword. Very light. Even the handle is made out of the lightest wood.

Any weapon can easily break this sword.

Yet when he attacks with this sword, no one can block it.

This is a very unique sword. Perhaps only one person in the world can use this sword, dare to use this sword.

Sword, rested right by the table, with some clean clothing.

When Ah Fei woke up, the first thing he noticed is this sword.

His eyes shined.

When he sees this sword, it's like seeing a long-lost lover, an old best friend. Blood surged from his heart.

He slowly reached out with his hand, and grabbed the sword.

His hand began to shake. But once it held the sword's

handle, the hand calmed.

He held the sword, but his eyes gazed far... far... away...

His mind wandered into the distance.

He remembered when he first used a sword. The first time blood dripped off the point. All those people who died under his sword... those terrible people.

His blood began to boil.

That was a time of much grief and disaster, but also much splendor and excitement!

But that time has passed, passed for a long time now.

He already promised the woman he love, to forget all about the past!

Although he now lives a peaceful life, it's also a lonely life. But what's wrong with that? Isn't it most people's wish to live a serene life?

No footstep could be heard. Lin XianEr is already at the front door.

Although she looks a bit tired, her smile remained just as alluring.

No matter what he gave up, that smile could fully compensate.

Ah Fei immediately let go of the sword, and said with a smile, "You woke up earlier than me today. Looks like I'm getting lazier."

Lin XianEr did not answer his question. She instead asked, "Do you like this sword?"

Ah Fei did not answer her question either. Because he doesn't want to say the truth, but can't lie.

Lin XianEr said, "Do you know where this sword came from?"

Ah Fei said, "No."

Lin XianEr slowly walked up to him, and sat by his side. She said, "I asked someone to forge it last night."

Ah Fei was shocked, and said, "You?"

Lin XianEr lifted the sword, and said, "Is this sword like the one you used to have?"

Ah Fei did not respond.

Lin XianEr said, "You don't like it?"

Ah Fei thought for a long time, before he asked, "Why did you make this sword for me?"

Lin XianEr said, "Because you'll need to use it."

Ah Fei froze. He said, "You... you want me to kill?"

Lin XianEr said, "No. I want you to save someone."

Ah Fei said, "Save someone? Who?"

Lin XianEr said, "Your best friend..."

Before she finished this sentence, Ah Fei jumped up and yelled, “Li XunHuan?”

Lin XianEr nodded. Ah Fei’s faced turned pure red, and said, “Where is he? What happened?”

Lin XianEr grabbed his hand, and said tenderly, “Sit down first. You have to be patient. Let me tell you the whole story.”

Ah Fei took several deep breaths, and finally sat down.

Lin XianEr said, “Other than you, there are four top level fighters in the world today. Do you know who they are?”

Ah Fei said, “Tell me.”

Lin XianEr said, “Number one is obviously the ‘Mysterious Old Man’, number two is ShangGuan JinHong. Of course, Li XunHuan, brother Li, is also at their level.”

Ah Fei said, “And the last person?”

Lin XianEr sighed, and said, “This one is called Jin WuMing. He’s the youngest, but also the scariest.”

Ah Fei said, “Scariest?”

Lin XianEr said, “Because he’s not human. He has no humanity. His biggest goal in life is to kill. His biggest pleasure comes from killing. Other than killing, he knows nothing, cares nothing.

There’s a glow in Ah Fei’s eyes. He said, “What weapon does he use?”

Lin XianEr put down that sword and said, “Sword!”

Ah Fei's hand unconsciously picked up that sword, squeezing it tightly.

Lin XianEr said, "I heard that his sword art is as ruthless as yours, and also as fast."

Ah Fei said, "I don't know any sword art. I just know how to use the sword to strike my enemy's throat."

Lin XianEr said, "This is your type of sword art. The point of any sword art is the same."

Ah Fei said, "So what you mean is... Li XunHuan's in this person's hand?"

Lin XianEr said, "Not just him, but also ShangGuan JinHong... But ShangGuan JinHong might not be there, just him."

She won't let Ah Fei respond, and quickly continued, "If you had never seen this man, you'd never know how scary he is! Your sword might be faster, but your person..."

Ah Fei bit his teeth, and said, "I just want to know where he is."

Lin XianEr gently held his hand, and said, "I didn't want you using a sword again, killing again, getting into danger again. But for brother Li... I... I have to let you go. I can't be so selfish."

Ah Fei looked at her. His face full of gratitude.

Tears poured down Lin XianEr's face. She said, "I can tell you where he is. But you... you have to promise me one thing."

Ah Fei said, "Promise what?"

Lin XianEr squeezed his hand, and said with tears, "You must promise me, that you'll come back. I'll wait for you forever..."

* * *

The carriage is very big.

Long Xiao3Yun sat in the corner, looking at the person before him.

This person stood.

Even while inside a carriage, this person stood.

No matter how bumpy the road is, he remained straight as a statue.

Long Xiao3Yun had never seen such a person. He couldn't even imagine such a person.

He felt that most people in the world are idiots, people he can play around with.

But for someone reason, in front of this person, he felt a little scared.

As long as this person is here, he would feel a killing aura surrounding him.

But he's also very pleased.

ShangGuan JinHong agreed to everything he asked.

The notice has been sent. Most people have seen them. The ceremony is set for next month.

Now, with Jin WuMing with him, Li XunHuan is certainly dead.

He can't think of a single reason how Li XunHuan could survive.

He took a deep breath, and closed his eyes. A beautiful face appeared in his mind, lying in his lap, telling him sweetly, "You really aren't a kid anymore. You know so much more than most people. I really can't figure out where you learn these things."

Long Xiao3Yun couldn't help but smile at this point.

"Some things don't have to be learnt. You just know when you're ready."

He felt that he's already an adult.

This feeling is bound to make most young boys feel delighted.

Young boys do their best to be like adults. Old men do their best to be like little kids.. This is certainly one of the oddities of life.

Anyone else, at this point, would stop thinking.

But Long Xiao3Yun thought deeper, "Why did she come to me?"

"Does she want to know about Li XunHuan's location?"

When he thought of this, Long Xiao3Yun became more awake. "Why would she want to know where Li XunHuan is?"

"Does she want to save Li XunHuan?"

Of course this can't be the case. Long Xiao3Yun knew how much Lin XianEr hates Li XunHuan. He also knew that she once tried to use ShangGuan JinHong to kill Li XunHuan.

"Then why?"

He couldn't think further, because he can't come up with a reason.

He didn't know that the situation has changed. At that time, Lin XianEr did want ShangGuan JinHong to kill Li XunHuan. But now, it's very different.

If she wants to keep a deadlocked situation with ShangGuan JinHong, then she must not let Li XunHuan and Ah Fei die!

Or ShangGuan JinHong would crush her, because ShangGuan JinHong had already let slip, "I am me. I'm neither Ah Fei, nor Jin WuMing. We're just using each other. When we no longer need each other, we can say goodbye!"

The directions of winds in the martial world, changes no less than the heart of a woman. No one can guess which way it will blow.

The carriage stopped at busiest spot in the city, in front of a very large and showy silk store.

Is Li XunHuan hidden here?

Long Xiao4Yun and his son really are geniuses. They know

that crowded places make for the best hiding places.

Long Xiao3Yun stood up, and said, "After you."

Jin WuMing said, "You go first."

This is the first time he ever spoke to Long Xiao3Yun.

He doesn't want to walk in front of anyone. Wants even less to have someone walk behind him.

They walked across the store.

In the back is the storage room.

Is Li XunHuan hidden here? This is certainly a good spot.

But Long Xiao3Yun kept going, past the storage room.

They went past the back door.

There's a horse carriage past the back door.

Long Xiao3Yun didn't say anything this time. He bowed courteously towards Jin WuMing, and got on the carriage.

So Li XunHuan's not here.

Long Xiao3Yun only came here to escape potential followers.

This father and son pair really is quite sneaky.

The horse carriage headed out the city.

Then they stopped at a rice storage house outside the city. But this isn't where Li XunHuan's hidden either.

Here, they got off the carriage, and went on a cow-cart for carrying rice.

This new cart took them back into the city. It's quite crowded to hide inside. Long Xiao3Yun said, "Sorry about this."

Jin WuMing did not say anything.

Their plan was flawless. Their movements were quick, the change in direction was sharp, and sudden.

Even the best followers would not be able to keep up.

Long Xiao3Yun knew Jin WuMing won't praise him. He just hoped Jin WuMing would show some sort of smile on the face.

If someone does something he's very proud of, but doesn't get praised. It's like a woman wearing her sexiest dress to see her lover, and her lover doesn't even look at her dress.

Besides, Long Xiao3Yun is still, after all, a kid.

Kids and women's minds work in similar ways.

Yet Jin WuMing was expressionless.

The carriage entered a quiet street. This street only has seven households.

All seven households are either royal relatives or big officials.

Suddenly, one of the doors opened.

The carriage entered the door.

Everyone knew that this is mayor Fan LinQuan's house.

How could people in the martial world get involved with someone like him?

No one would believe this.

But waiting in the main hall, is none other than Long Xiao4Yun.

When Jin WuMing exited the carriage, Long Xiao4Yun walked toward him, and said with a smile, "I've long heard of Mr. Jin's name. It's amazing that I got to see you today."

Jin WuMing just gazed at his own sword. He didn't even look at Long Xiao4Yun.

Long Xiao4Yun still kept his smile, said, "I've already prepared food and wine. Please help yourself."

Jin WuMing still stood there motionless. He said coldly, "Li XunHuan is here?"

Long Xiao4Yun said, "This is Official Fan's home. Official Fan wanted a vacation a few days back. The Emperor allowed him a three-month break."

When he got here, a smug expression appeared on Long Xiao4Yun's face. He continued, "Elder Fan does not have any relatives. And his governor is a good friend of mine. So after he left, I borrowed it for a while."

Actually, the way he got this place is quite simple, because money can get one in into many places. Yet most people

would never think of this trick.

No wonder Long Xiao4Yun would feel smug.

Jin WuMing still stared at his own hand. He suddenly said, "You think no one could possibly follow us here?"

Long Xiao4Yun's expression changed, but he still smiled, "If someone can follow you here, I'll kowtow to him, in admiration."

Jin WuMing said coldly, "Then be prepared to kowtow."

Long Xiao4Yun said with a smile, "But if..."

After these two words, he stopped speaking. His smile quickly disappeared.

Long Xiao3Yun followed his father's gaze. His white face turned green.

A person stood in the corner of the room.

No one knew when he came, or how.

Chapter 57: Fireworks

He wore an ordinary green robe. It was very clean when he first put it on, but now it's filled with mud and sweat. The pants are torn at the knees.

His body is quite dirty, his hair messed up.

But while this person stood there, Long Xiao4Yun could feel a killing aura bearing down on him.

This person looked just like the sword on his waist.

A sword without a sheath!

Ah Fei!

Ah Fei did come after all.

Perhaps only Ah Fei could follow them here!

The trickiest, most evasive animal is the fox.

Even the smartest, best-trained dog might not be able to catch a fox.

But Ah Fei caught a fox with his bear hands at the age of eleven.

It was a grueling task to follow them, which is why he's so

dirty.

But this is the real Ah Fei.

Only like this, can he exude his courage, his coldness, and his intimidating savageness!

A calm type of savageness! An extraordinary type of savageness!

Long Xiao4Yun quickly regained his composure. He said, "So it's brother Ah Fei. Nice to meet you."

Ah Fei glared at him coldly.

Long Xiao4Yun said, "I really admire you for making it here."

Ah Fei still glared at him coldly. His eyes were bright and sharp. After two days of following, his eyes regained part of its original intensity.

An intensity that rivaled Jin WuMing's.

Long Xiao4Yun smiled, and said, "Although you are a great tracker, Mr. Jin was still able to discover you."

Ah Fei looked at Jin WuMing.

Their eyes met, like a sharp sword striking a cold, dark hard rock.

No one knows if the sword is sharper? Or the stone is harder?

Although neither person spoke, sparks came out of their gazes.

Long Xiao4Yun looked at Jin WuMing, then at Ah Fei. He said, "Although Mr. Jin discovered you, he never said anything. Do you know why?"

Ah Fei was seemingly drawn to Jin WuMing. His head never turned.

Long Xiao4Yun chuckled, and said, "Because Mr. Jin wants you to be here."

He then turned towards Jin WuMing and said, "Am I right, Mr. Jin?"

Jin WuMing's also seemingly drawn to Ah Fei's gaze. He didn't move either.

After a long time, Long Xiao4Yun began to laugh, and said, "There's only one reason why Mr. Jin wanted you here. Because he wants to kill you!"

Finally, Ah Fei's gaze moved toward Jin WuMing's sword.

Jin WuMing's gaze seemingly also moved towards Ah Fei's sword.

These might be the most similar swords in the world!

Neither sword could be considered incredible weapons, made by top weapon smiths.

Although both swords are sharp, they are too thin, too fragile! Too easily broken.

Although the swords are similar, they are positioned differently.

Ah Fei's sword is located at the front of his waist, the handle tilted towards the right.

Jin WuMing's sword is located on the right side, the handle tilted towards the left.

But in between these two swords, there seems to be an unusual magnetic attraction.

The two men's eyes gazed intently at each other's sword. They walked toward each other, but their eyes never left the swords.

By the time they're about two meters from each other, both suddenly stopped!

Then, both stood as still as statues.

Jin WuMing wore a simple and short yellow robe. The robe only goes to his knees. His cuffs are very tight. His fingers thin and long, but the bones stick out, showing incredible strength.

Ah Fei's robe is even shorter. His fingers are also very thin and long, but they are very strong, as if made of stone.

Neither grooms much, but their nails are both very short.

They don't want anything to affect their speed of pulling out swords.

These might be the two most similar people in the world!

Now they've finally met.

Only when the two are standing together, and you get to examine them closely, can you see beyond their superficial similarities, and see their differences.

Jin WuMing's face looks like a mask. His expression never changes.

Although Ah Fei's face is also serious, cold. But at any time, a fire could burn from within those eyes at any time, so much fire it could even burn his own body and soul.

But Jin WuMing's whole body is dead.

Perhaps before his life even begun, his body had died.

Ah Fei is amazingly patient, can wait, yet will not endure anyone.

Jin WuMing can kill someone for a single word, perhaps even a single glance. Yet when necessary, he could endure anything.

Both are unusual, but very scary.

No one knew why Heaven would make such two people, why make them meet.

It's late autumn.

The leaves are withered.

The wind is not blowing heavily, but yellow leaves continuously float down. Could it be because of the killing auras?

An unspeakable chill rose into the air.

Although the two swords are still at their waists. Although the two people have not even moved their hands. But Long Xiao4Yun and his son are already gasping for air.

Suddenly, cold lights shined!

Ten flashes of light streaked across the air, towards Ah Fei!

Long Xiao4Yun had attacked.

Obviously, he didn't expect these darts to actually hit Ah Fei. But if Ah Fei has to deal with these darts, Jin WuMing's sword can penetrate his throat!

The sword flashed in the air!

A streak of 'ding ding' sounds could be heard. The cold flashes fell to the ground.

Jin WuMing's sword came out. The point of his sword streaked by Ah Fei's ear.

Ah Fei's hand had held his sword, but the sword remained in his waist.

The darts were cut down by Jin WuMing.

The Long father and son's faces sank.

Jin WuMing and Ah Fei stared at each other. No expressions appeared on their faces.

Then, Jin WuMing slowly put his sword back into his sheath.

Ah Fei's hand loosened the grip on his sword.

After a long time, Jin WuMing suddenly said, "You realized that my sword aimed at those darts, and not at you?"

Ah Fei said, "Yes."

When the darts came, Jin WuMing's sword came out. Other than reaching for his sword, Ah Fei showed no movement.

Before Ah Fei could respond, Jin WuMing added, "But your reactionary speed has slowed dpwm."

Ah Fei thought for a long time. A gloomy expression appeared on his face, as he said, "You're right!"

Jin WuMing said, "I can kill you!"

Ah Fei didn't even have to think, "Yes."

Long Xiao4Yun and his son looked at each other. Both let out a sigh of relief.

Jin WuMing suddenly said, "But I won't kill you!"

The Long father and son's expression changed again.

Ah Fei examined Jin WuMing's dead, gray eyes carefully. After a long time, he said, "You won't kill me?"

Jin WuMing said, "I won't kill you, because you are Ah Fei!"

His eyes let out an indescribable painful expression. His eyes are even gloomier than Ah Fei's.

His mind wandered into the distance, and saw a person.

A mixture of a goddess and a devil.

After a long time, he continued, "If I were you, you could kill me today."

Perhaps not even Ah Fei could understand this. Only Jin WuMing would know.

Anyone who lived two years like Ah Fei, would have worse reactionary speed. Besides, he had been taking sleeping drugs every night for the past two years.

These drugs can certainly make anyone react more slowly.

The reason Jin WuMing isn't going to kill Ah Fei, is obviously not because of sympathy. It's just that he understands Ah Fei's pain, because he's also experiencing that type of pain.

Perhaps he wants Ah Fei to live, so someone could share his pain.

When a lovesick person knew that someone else has also been discarded, his pain would lessen. When a man who lost money sees others losing even more money, he'd feel better.

Ah Fei just stood there, as if trying to absorb Jin WuMing's words.

Jin WuMing said, "You can go now."

Ah Fei raised his head, and said emphatically, "I'm not leaving."

Jin WuMing said, "You won't leave? You want me to kill you?"

Ah Fei said, "Yes!"

Long Xiao3Yun suddenly yelled, "What about Lin XianEr? You're willing to leave her behind?"

These words struck Ah Fei like needles sticking into his heart. His body slumped.

Jin WuMing turned toward Long Xiao4Yun, and said slowly, "I like to kill people. I like to kill them myself. Understand?"

Long Xiao4Yun forced a smile, and said, "I understand."

Jin WuMing said, "You better understand, or I will kill you."

He looked away from Long Xiao4Yun, and said, "Where's Li XunHuan? Take me to him."

Long Xiao4Yun glanced at Ah Fei, and said, "What about him..."

Jin WuMing said coldly, "I can kill him anytime I want to!"

Ah Fei only felt his stomach churning. He suddenly bent down and began to vomit.

He vomited bitter saliva, only bitter saliva.

Because he hadn't eaten anything the past two days.

"You must promise me, that you'll come back. I'll wait for you forever..."

These are the words of the woman he loves.

For these words, he can't die.

But Li XunHuan...

Li XunHuan's not just his best friend, but also the his idol.
How could he stand here, watching someone else kill Li XunHuan?

He continued to vomit.

Now, he's coughing out blood.

* * *

Li XunHuan doesn't know where he is. He doesn't care.

He can't tell night from day.

He can't even move, because all his main pressure points are sealed.

No food, no water.

He's been here for over ten days.

Even if his pressure points weren't sealed, the hunger was enough to immobilize him.

Jin WuMing glared at him

He lied at the corner of the room.

The room is quite dim. No one could see his expression. They could only see his dirty, ragged shirt, thin, weak face, and those miserable eyes.

Jin WuMing suddenly said, "So this is Li XunHuan?"

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Yes!"

Jin WuMing looked seemingly disappointed, and doesn't quite believe Long Xiao4Yun. He said, "This is the famous Little Li Tan Hua?"

Long Xiao4Yun sighed, and said, "I didn't want to do this to him. But.. 'Men may not want to hurt tigers, but tigers want to hurt men.' Circumstances dictated that I must do this."

Jin WuMing remained silent for a while, then said, "Where's his dagger?"

Long Xiao4Yun thought for a moment, and then said, "Does Mr. Jin wants to see his dagger?"

Jin WuMing did not respond, because this question is pointless.

Long Xiao4Yun finally took out a dagger.

The dagger is very light, very short, very thin, like a piece of leaf.

Jin WuMing held the dagger tightly, as if he doesn't want to let it go.

Long Xiao4Yun said with a smile, "Actually, this is a very ordinary dagger. It's hardly a piercing weapon."

Jin WuMing said, "Piercing weapon? Are you even qualified to say what a piercing weapon is?"

His eyes suddenly glanced at Long Xiao4Yun, and said, "Do you even know what a piercing weapon is?"

His eyes are still the dead, gray color they always were. But

there's something insidious about them, as if they are the devil's eyes in your nightmares. So frightening you feel scared even after waking up."

Long Xiao4Yun found that he began to have trouble breathing. He forced a smile, and said, "Please enlighten me."

Jin WuMing's eyes returned to the dagger. He said, "If it can kill, then it's a piercing weapon. Otherwise, even the most prized and the sharpest weapons, when they fall into the hands of people like you, are just junk."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Yes, yes. Mr. Jin is quite correct. I understand..."

Jin WuMing didn't even listen to him. He suddenly said, "Do you know how many people died under this type of dagger?"

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Probably... probably too many to count."

Jin WuMing said, "It's countable!"

Although the Golden Money Clan has only been around for two years, they've already done vast amounts of research on all the details of the martial world. ShangGuan JinHong's mottos are

"Every detail is important. Don't overlook anything."

"A piece of tillage, a piece of harvest.'

It's not luck that the Golden Money Clan has become so dominant.

Long Xiao4Yun had also heard, that even before the clan appeared, ShangGuan JinHong had already studied every single famous person in the martial world.

How much effort did it take to do this?

Long Xiao4Yun doesn't seem to believe him, and couldn't help asking, "If so, how many?"

Jin WuMing said, "Sixty-seven."

He then added coldly, "Among these sixty-seven, none of them had lower kung fu than you."

Long Xiao4Yun could only smile along. His gaze turned toward Li XunHuan, as if asking him to confirm this.

But Li XunHuan doesn't seem to have the energy to do anything.

Long Xiao3Yun suddenly said with a smile, "If Li XunHuan died from this type of dagger, hehe. Wouldn't that be something?"

Before he finished speaking, the dagger shined, streaking towards Li XunHuan.

Long Xiao3Yun almost jumped in excitement.

But the dagger did not land in Li XunHuan's throat, but rather in a stone besides Li XunHuan.

So Jin WuMing is an expert on hidden weapons too.

Jin WuMing suddenly said, "Unseal his pressure points."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "But..."

Jin WuMing didn't give him a chance to respond. He said coldly, "I said, unseal his pressure points."

Long Xiao4Yun and his son looked at each other. They realized Jin WuMing's intentions.

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Clan Leader ShangGuan only wants Li XunHuan's person. He doesn't have to be alive."

Long Xaio3Yun said, "Old Uncle ShangGuan doesn't drink. So he obviously hates drunkards. Only a dead drunkard is a drunkard that can't drink, and won't look so loathsome."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Besides, it's certainly easier to escort a dead person than a live one."

Long Xiao3Yun said, "Of course, Mr. Jin would surely not kill a person who can't defend himself. So..."

Jin WuMing said coldly, "You are talking way too much."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "Yes, yes. I'll go unseal his pressure points now."

He was the one who sealed Li XunHuan's pressure points. So this wasn't a difficult task for him.

Long Xiao4Yun patted Li XunHuan on the shoulders, and said tenderly, "Brother, looks like Mr. Jin wants to duel with you. Mr. Jin's swordsmanship is world-renowned. You should be very careful."

At this moment, he could actually call Li XunHuan 'brother'. And say it in a caring manner.

How could you not be in awe of him?

Li XunHuan did not say anything.

There's nothing else to say. He just smiled weakly, and slowly pulled out the dagger by his side.

He stared at the dagger. Tears seemingly came down his eyes.

This is the world-famous dagger that has never missed.

Now, the dagger is in his hand.

But does he have the energy to still release it?

A woman losing her beauty, a hero reaching the end of the road. Both are tragedies of life.

One can't help but pity them.

But at this moment, no one pitied him.

Long Xiao3Yun's eyes glowed. He said with a smile, "Little Li's Flying Dagger never misses. But I wonder if it will still work this time."

Li XunHuan raised his head and looked at Long Xiao3Yun. Then he lowered it back down again.

Jin WuMing said, "When I'm about to kill someone, I have to give my opponent a chance. This is your last chance, understand?"

Li XunHuan smiled, a very pitiful smile.

Jin WuMing said, "Ok. You can get up now."

Li XunHuan began to cough.

Long Xiao3Yun said tenderly, "If Uncle Li can't get up, I can help you."

He blinked his eyes, and quickly continued with a smile, "But I don't think that'll be necessary. I heard that Uncle Li could release his dagger even while lying down."

Li XunHuan sighed, and seemingly wanted to speak.

But before he could do so, a person came in.

Ah Fei!

There's seemingly no blood on Ah Fei's face. But there is a bit on the side of his mouth.

At this moment, he looked a lot older.

He flew in at lightning speed. But once he entered the room, he became still as a statue.

Jin WuMing said, "You still won't give up?"

Li XunHuan raised his head. Tears came out the side of his eyes.

Ah Fei only glanced at him, just a glance. Then he turned toward Jin WuMing, and said, "Before killing him, you must kill me!"

He said this very calmly, very seriously. There's no sign of

excitement in his voice.

This showed his resolve.

Jin WuMing's eyes changed into a different type of expression. He said, "You don't care about her anymore?"

Ah Fei said, "Even if I die, she can still live on."

He said this calmly. But a hint of sadness appeared on his face. His breathing quickened.

Jin WuMing saw this.

He seemingly became more content upon hearing these words, and said, "You don't care that she'll be sad?"

Ah Fei said, "If I can't live contently, then it's better to die. If I don't die, she will be sadder."

Jin WuMing said, "You think she's that kind of a person?"

Ah Fei said, "Of course!"

In Ah Fei's mind, Lin XianEr's not just a goddess, but also a saint.

A faint smile appeared on the side of Jin WuMing's mouth.

No one had ever seen him smile. Even he himself doesn't remember when he first smiled.

He smiled very awkwardly, because his muscles don't seem to know how to smile.

He has never wanted to smile, because a smile and soften a

person's heart.

But this is a different type of a smile... this smile is sharp as a sword. Except swords hurt people's body, this smile hurts their feelings.

Ah Fei doesn't understand this smile at all. He said coldly, "You don't have to smile. Although there's an eight percent chance that you'll kill me, there's also a twenty percent chance that I'll kill you."

Jin WuMing's smile disappeared. He said, "Since I told you that I won't kill you, I'm not going to spare your life."

Ah Fei said, "No need."

Jin WuMing said, "I want to see you alive, so I can see..."

Before he finished this sentence, swords flashed.

The sword lights shined past each other, streaking fast as lightening.

But another flash streaked even faster than the swords.
What is it?

In the next moment, all the flashes disappeared.

All movements stopped.

Chapter 58: Hero

Jin WuMing's sword had penetrated Ah Fei's right shoulder. But the sword only went in an inch.

Ah Fei's sword is still a few inches from Jin WuMing's throat.

Blood flowed down Ah Fei's shoulder, turning his shirt red.

Why did Jin WuMing's sword stop?

On the back of Jin WuMing's shoulder, sticks a dagger!

Little Li's Flying Dagger!

What kind of force allowed Li XunHuan to release this dagger?

Long Xiao4Yun and Long Xiao3Yun's faces turned white. Their hands shook, as they slowly backed off. Both wondered where Li XunHuan got his energy.

Li XunHuan got up!

Jin WuMing turned around, and examined Li XunHuan. There's still no expression on his face. After a long time, he finally said, "Great dagger!"

Li XunHuan chuckled, and said, "Not really. It's just that you took me too lightly. Or I might not have been able to hurt

you!”

Jin WuMing said coldly, “By being able to trick me, you’ve shown to be superior.”

Li XunHuan said, “I didn’t trick you, nor said that I have no power to release the dagger. You simply thought this way. Your eyes lied to you.”

Jin WuMing thought for a moment, then said, “You’re right. I made the mistake. It had nothing to do with you.”

Li XunHuan said, “Good. You might be a killer, but at least not a conniving person.”

Jin WuMing glanced at Long Xiao4Yun and his son, then said coldly, “Conniving people aren’t qualified to be killers.”

Li XunHuan said, “You can go now.”

Jin WuMing said, “Why didn’t you kill me?”

Li XunHuan said, “Because you didn’t plan on killing my friend.”

Jin WuMing lowered his head, and looked at the dagger on his shoulder. He said, “But I wanted to cripple his arm with my strike.”

Li XunHuan said, “I know.”

Jin WuMing said, “But my dagger wound is very light.”

Li XunHuan said, “ ‘Someone grants me one penny, I repay him three pennies back.’ ”

Jin WuMing raised his head, and looked at Li XunHuan closely. Although he spoke no words, a strange change occurred in Jin WuMing's eyes. He looked at Li XunHuan similar to how he looked at ShangGuan JinHong.

Li XunHuan said, "I also want to tell you two more things."

Jin WuMing said, "What?"

Li XunHuan said, "Although I've injured sixty-seven people, twenty-eight of them did not die. Those who died deserved it."

Jin WuMing did not speak.

Li XunHuan coughed a few times lightly, then continued, "I've never wrongly killed anyone in my life! That's why... I hope that you'll think twice before you kill."

Jin WuMing thought for a long time, then said, "I also want to tell you something."

Li XunHuan said, "I'm listening."

Jin WuMing said, "I never accept anyone's kindness, nor accept anyone's lecture!"

At this moment, he suddenly slapped the dagger down with his hand.

The dagger pierced through his body, coming out on the other side.

Blood came out!

'Dang', the sword also dropped to the ground.

Jin WuMing's body shook for a moment, but his face remained expressionless. He showed no signs of pain, neither on his face, nor his body.

He didn't say a single word, nor looked at anyone. He simply walked out the room!

Hero? ... What's a hero like? Is he a hero?

A hero usually represents: Coldness! Brutality! Loneliness! Ruthless!

Someone has said this about heroes:

Kill people as if they were grass, gamble like there's no tomorrow, always drink good wine, and a lecher with no regret!

Of course, not all heroes are like this. Some are different.

But how many heroes are there like Li XunHuan?

There might be only one thing in common among heroes. That is, all heroes lead depressing lives.

Ah Fei sighed deeply, and said, "He probably can never use a sword again in his life."

Li XunHuan said, "He still has his right hand."

Ah Fei said, "But he's used to using the left hand. His right hand would be much slower."

He sighed again, and continued, "For a swordsman, 'slow' means 'death'."

He almost never sighs.

But now, he not only sighed for Jin WuMing, but also himself.

Li XunHuan examined him, and then said, "If a person has the willpower, even if he has no hand, he would still be able to use a fast sword held by his mouth. If one's dejected, even if he has the use of both hands, would still find both hands useless."

He chuckled, and continued, "Many people in the world has two perfectly healthy hands. But how many of those hands have blazing speed?"

Ah Fei listened carefully. After a while, a bright glow appeared in his eyes.

He suddenly rushed over to Li XunHuan's side, grabbed his arms, and said, "I understand what you mean."

Li XunHuan said, "I knew you'd understand."

When he finished these words, tears came down both of their faces. If a third person could watch this, he'd certainly be moved.

Too bad Long Xiao4Yun and his son are not this type of people. They were quietly trying to get away.

Li XunHuan's back was toward them. He didn't seem to notice.

Ah Fei seemingly glanced at them, but didn't say anything.

Only after till they were out the door, did Ah Fei sigh, and

said, "I knew you were going to let them go."

Li XunHuan chuckled, and said, "He once saved me."

Ah Fei said, "He saved you once, but he had hurt you many times."

Li XunHuan chuckled, and said, "It's not that I forgot about them. But rather, I never remember these things, because he has his worries too."

Ah Fei thought for a while, then suddenly smiled. He said, "I finally realized, that there are many things in this world which are not fair."

Li XunHuan said, "Not fair?"

Ah Fei said, "Not fair. For example, some people might be virtuous their whole life, but only made one mistake. Yet this one mistake would follow them their whole lives. Not only could others not forgive them, not even they could forgive themselves."

Li XunHuan did not respond.

He realized that Ah Fei's words are true.

Ah Fei continued, "Yet there are people like Long Xiao4Yun. He might've done only one good thing in life, and that is by saving you. So you'd never think that he's too bad a person."

Li XunHuan suddenly realized why Ah Fei's saying all this.

He's trying to argue for Lin XianEr.

He feels that Lin XianEr has only done one thing wrong in life, yet Li XunHuan would never forgive her.

‘Love’ really is amazing. Sometimes it’s sweet, sometimes it’s bitter, sometimes it’s very scary... It can turn people into idiots, and turn people’s eyes blind.

When Long Xiao4Yun and his son escaped, both felt very pleased with themselves.

Long Xiao4Yun couldn’t help but smile and said, “Remember. All take advantage of other people’s weaknesses. If you can take advantage of your opponents, you’ll never lose.”
Long Xiao3Yun said, “I now know all of Li XunHuan’s weaknesses.”

Long Xiao4Yun said, “So we’re bound to get him sooner or later.”

He suddenly heard someone laugh.

Li XunHuan laughed quite strangely. He said, “Some memories are forgotten quickly, but others will stay with you forever.”

Ah Fei sighed, and said, “That’s because you refuse to remember some memories.”

He might be only a young man, but his views on certain things in life are deeper than most grown man.

Li XunHuan said, “While you may refuse to remember certain things, your mind can’t help but think about them. A person can never choose what he remembers. Perhaps this is one of the sadness of life.”

Ah Fei said, "What about you? Can you honestly just remember that he had once saved you? That you had forgotten about everything else?"

The laughter came from the opposite rooftop.

A person sat on the rooftop, eating a piece of chicken. He's none other than Crazy Hu.

His eyes looked only at the chicken, and not at Long Xiao4Yun or his son. He seemingly finds the chicken much more pleasing to the eyes.

He said, "You don't have to run away so quickly. Li XunHuan won't come after you. Or he wouldn't have let you out the door in the first place."

Long Xiao4Yun's face suddenly turned very nasty.

He just realized where Li XunHuan got his strength.

But he can't offend Crazy Hu.

Long Xiao4Yun suddenly chuckled, and said, "I'm quite apologetic that you have to take care of my brother these past days."

Crazy Hu said, "It's not a big deal. Li XunHuan doesn't eat much. He only needs two chicken legs and a piece of bread a day. Besides, you have an idiot guarding the door. I just sealed his sleeping pressure points twice a day, and he actually thought that he naturally dozed off."

Long Xiao4Yun grinded his teeth. He wished to see that guard sleep forever right now.

Crazy Hu continued, "Obviously, I repay all my debts. But now we're even. And I never care to speak to the likes of you anyway."

Long Xiao4Yun could only pretend to smile along.

Crazy Hu said, "But I do have to tell you one last thing before I leave."

Long Xiao4Yun said, "I'm listening."

Crazy Hu said, "You might be a load of crap, but ShangGuan JinHong is a bigger load of crap. If you want to be his sworn brother, I suggest you find a rope to hang yourself instead."

This really is the last thing he said. When he finished talking, he left in a flash.

Long Xiao4Yun smiled, and said, "Never thought so many people would know about ShangGuan JinHong and I becoming sworn brothers."

* * *

They walked slowly.

Li XunHuan and Ah Fei did not talk.

They knew that silence can sometimes be more precious than words.

Dusk.

A person is blowing a flute. The music also carried a rustle of the autumn air.

This type of music tends to bring back one's memories, and make them think of loved ones.

Ah Fei suddenly said, "I need to get back."

Li XunHuan said, "She's waiting for you?"

Ah Fei said, "Yes."

Li XunHuan did not respond. After a while, he couldn't help but ask, "You're certain that she's going to wait for you?"

Ah Fei's face turned white. After a long time, he finally said, "She asked me to come rescue you."

Li XunHuan's at a loss for words.

He understood Lin XianEr's mind quiet well. But can't figure out why she would do this.

Ah Fei said, "There are two most important people in my life. I hope... you can become friends."

He spoke this very slowly, in fragments, very painfully.

Upon seeing his pain, Li XunHuan couldn't help but feel for him.

Only someone who has loved, knows just how powerful and scary love is.

Li XunHuan suddenly said, "I want to see her too."

Ah Fei's lips closed tightly.

Li XunHuan said, "If it's inconvenient, you can just tell her

that I said thanks.”

Ah Fei finally said, “I... I just hope that you won’t hurt her.”

Ah Fei really shouldn’t have said these words. Because he knew that Li XunHuan never hurts anyone else... just himself.

He only said this because of Lin XianEr.

Raising their heads, a sea of candlelight greeted their eyes.

For some reason, they’ve managed to return to that busy street.

This street is livelier at night than the day. There are all kinds of little shops here, each with many bright candles lighting up the merchandises.

A row of candy gourds sparkled under the lights.

Li XunHuan suddenly stopped.

A face seemingly appeared on the surface of each candy gourd.

A face of a young girl wearing a red dress, with big eyes and a bright smile.

Then, he saw that dumpling restaurant.

“Is LingLing still there?”

Li XunHuan felt very ashamed, because he totally forgot about her.

He saw that Ah Fei has the same expression LingLing had when she came... Ah Fei had never been to this type of place before.

Li XunHuan laughed.

He's happy that his friend hasn't lost touch with his inner child.

Ah Fei suddenly said, "It's been a long time since we last drank together."

Li XunHuan said, "You want a drink?"

Ah Fei said, "For some reason, only when I'm with you, do I feel like drinking."

Then Ah Fei also laughed.

Li XunHuan's mood also brightened up. He said, "How about we go to that dumpling house over there?"

Ah Fei said with a smile, "Sure. I can't afford anything more expensive anyway."

Some things in life really are strange.

For example:

The uglier the woman, the more likely she is to do strange things. The poorer the person, the more he is to treat others to meals.

It really is quite enjoyable to treat others to a meal. Too bad not many people know how to enjoy such a thing.

In a corner table, sat a white-robed man.

Li XunHuan saw him immediately upon entering.

Anyone would be attracted by this man.

Although this place is filled with smoke and oil, his clothing looked bright and clean. The robe looked seemingly just washed.

The robe looks very simple, but also very luxurious.

But the most striking part about him is his mannerism.

He has an indescribable charisma about him.

All the tables around him are empty. Because everyone would feel unworthy of sitting next to him.

He is the same person who used a silver nugget to break the green-robed burly man's pole. The same person who broke the silver nugget into pieces with his hand.

Why is he still here? Is he waiting for someone?

He just picked up his cup. But when Li XunHuan came in, he stopped. His eyes moved towards Li XunHuan's face.

To the opposite of him sat another person. She's a young girl in a red dress, with long ponytails.

Chapter 59: Courage

Following his eyes, she turned around and saw Li XunHuan. Then she dashed over to him, grabbing his waist tightly.

She said with a big smile, "I knew you would come. I knew you wouldn't forget me."

LingLing really did wait for him...

Li XunHuan looked excited. He grabbed her hands and said, "You... you've been waiting all this time?"

LingLing nodded. She bit her lips and said, "Why did you come so late? You had me so worried..."

Ah Fei suddenly said, "You really were waiting for him?"

Only now did LingLing notice Ah Fei. Her expression changed... Of course she knew Ah Fei, but Ah Fei had never seen her.

LingLing blinked her eyes, before she finally said, "If I weren't waiting for him, then what am I here for?"

Ah Fei said coldly, "You can be here for many reasons. But if you were waiting for someone, your eyes should be gazing the front door. Anyone waiting for someone would not have his back turned against the door."

Li XunHuan didn't expect Ah Fei to say this.

Ah Fei never likes to hurt others' feelings. Yet his words had become so sharp, so scary.

Because he can't tolerate anyone lying to his friend.

Li XunHuan sighed inside.

Ah Fei examines things deeper than most people in this world.

So how did he become so blind in front of Lin XianEr?

LingLing's eyes turned red. Tears quickly came down her eyes, as she said, "If you had ever waited in the same place for over ten days, you'd know why my back's toward the door."

She wiped away some tears, and continued, "At first, my heart would jump every time a customer came in, thinking he's back. But after a while, I found that if the person you're waiting for won't come, watching the door is pointless. Watching would only make you more depressed."

Ah Fei did not respond.

He found that he had spoke too much.

LingLing lowered her head, and said, "If it weren't for that brother Lu accompanying me, I'd probably go crazy."

Li XunHuan's eyes turned towards the white-robed man, meeting his gaze.

Li XunHuan walked over, and said, "Thank you..."

The white-robed man cut him off, "No need to thank me. I stayed not to accompany her, but to wait for you."

Li XunHuan said, "Wait for me?"

The white-robed man said, "Right."

He smiled, and continued, "Not many people in the world are worthy enough for me to wait. Little Li Tan Hua is one of them."

Before Li XunHuan could respond, LingLing suddenly said, "I never told you who he is. How come you know him?"

The white-robed man said, "If you want to travel in the martial world, and live a bit longer, you really should recognize a few people. Little Li Tan Hua is one of them."

Ah Fei suddenly said, "Who are the others?"

The white-robed man glared at him, and said, "At the very least, you and I both count!"

Ah Fei looked at his own hands, an indescribable dreariness appeared in his eyes. He sat down on a neighboring table, and said, "BaiGan Wine!"

The waiter said, "What kind of dishes do you want to go with that?"

Ah Fei said, "Wine, yellow wine."

Anyone who knows about drinking, knows that the fastest way to get drunk is by accompanying wine with wine, using yellow wine to accompany BaiGan wine."

But most people don't use this combination. Because unless a person is incredibly miserable, he doesn't really want to get drunk too fast.

The white-robed man watched him intently.

His penetrating eyes slowly relaxed, then seemingly looked disappointed. But when those eyes turned toward Li XunHuan, they immediately became alert again.

Li XunHuan said, "May I ask for your name..."

The white-robed man said, "Lu FengXian."

Li XunHuan didn't seem surprised. He smiled, and said, "So you really are 'Silver Halberd, Warm Throat' Hero Lu."

Lu FengXian said coldly, "'Silver Halberd, Warm Throat' died ten years ago!"

This time, Li XunHuan was shocked.

But he didn't ask further, because he knew that Lu FengXian would explain.

Lu FengXian continued, "'Silver Halberd, Warm Throat' is dead, but Lu FengXian is not!"

Li XunHuan pondered at these words' meanings.

Lu FengXian is a very proud man.

Bai XiaoSheng ranked his Silver Marquis Halberd number five in the Book of Weapons. To others, this might be a glorious thing. To him, it's an absolute shame.

He can't bear to be under anyone else, but also realized that Bai XiaoSheng can't be wrong.

So he must have destroyed his own twin Silver Marquis Halberd, and created an even deadlier type of kung fu!

Li XunHuan slowly nodded, and said, "You're right. I should've realized that 'Silver Halberd, Warm Throat' is already dead."

Lu FengXian then said coldly, "Lu FengXian was dead for ten years. Only now is he reborn."

Li XunHuan's eyes glowed, and he said, "What revived Hero Lu?"

Lu FengXian slowly raised a single hand, a right hand.

He put this hand on the table, and said, "It's this hand that revived me!"

To others, this may seem like an ordinary hand.

The fingers are long, but the nails are neatly trimmed. The surface is very smooth.

This is very befitting of Lu FengXian's stature.

But if you look closely, you'll realize what's so special about it.

The skin color of the index finger, middle finger, and ring finger is different from other places.

The skin on these three fingers carried a special shine. They

looked as if they're made of metal, not skin.

Yet these three fingers are nonetheless grown on his hands.

How could a hand made of meat have three fingers made of metal?

Lu FengXian looked at his own hand, and sighed deeply. He said, "Too bad Bai XiaoSheng's already dead."

Li XunHuan said, "What if he wasn't?"

Lu FengXian said, "If he wasn't, I'd ask him, 'Can a hand be considered a weapon?'"

Li XunHuan chuckled, and said, "I heard a person say something very interesting today."

Lu FengXian said, "What did he say?"

Li XunHuan said, "He said that only something that can kill, can be considered a piercing weapon."

He continued, "Hands had always been weapons. But a hand that can kill, is not only a weapon, but a piercing weapon."

Lu FengXian did not respond, didn't even seem to move.

But his three fingers in the middle suddenly pierced through the table.

They made no noise. The wine cups on the table didn't shake at all. His fingers pierced through the table like it was made of tofu.

Lu FengXian said, "If this hand can be considered a weapon,

I wonder where it would rank on the Book of Weapons!"
Li XunHuan said, "It's hard to tell right now."

Lu FengXian said, "Why?"

Li XunHuan said, "Because a weapon is designed to attack humans, not tables."

Lu FengXian suddenly laughed.

It's a cold, sinister laugh. He then said, "But in my eyes, the people in this world are really no different from this table."

Li XunHuan said, "Really?"

Lu FengXian said, "Of course, some people are exceptions."

Li XunHuan said, "Which people?"

Lu FengXian said, "I thought there were six. But now there are only four."

He purposely glanced at Ah Fei, and continued, "Because Guo SongYang is already dead. And while another one's alive, he's not much different from a dead person."

Ah Fei's back faced Lu FengXian, and didn't notice his expression.

But at this moment, Ah Fei's face suddenly turned green.

He realized what Lu FengXian had meant.

Li XunHuan suddenly laughed, and said, "But that person will revive, and it won't take ten years."

Lu FengXian said, "I doubt it."

Li XunHuan said, "If you can come back to life, why not him?"

Lu FengXian said, "I'm different."

Li XunHuan said, "What's the difference?"

Lu FengXian said, "I didn't 'die' in a woman's hand. And my heart never died."

Crack, the wine cup in Ah Fei's hand broke apart.

Yet he still sat there quietly,

Lu FengXian didn't even look at him. His eyes remained on Li XunHuan, as he said, "The reason I came back into the martial world, is to find these four people. To prove whether my hand can be considered a piercing weapon. That's why I waited here for you!"

Li XunHuan thought for a long time, before he said, "You must prove this?"

Lu FengXian said, "Yes."

Li XunHuan said, "Who are you proving to?"

Lu FengXian said, "To myself."

Li XunHuan chuckled, and said, "That's right. One can lie to everyone, but himself..."

Lu FengXian suddenly got up, and said, "I'll wait for you outside!"

For some reason, all other restaurant patrons had already left.

LingLing looked scared to death.

Li XunHuan slowly got up.

LingLing suddenly grabbed his robe, and whispered, "You... you are really going?"

Li XunHuan said with a bitter smile, "There are some obligations in life you just can't hide from."

He then looked at Ah Fei.

Ah Fei did not turn around.

Lu FengXian was just about to walk out the door.

Ah Fei suddenly said, "Hold on."

Lu FengXian stopped, but didn't turn around. He said, "Do you have something to say?"

Ah Fei's hand tightly clutched the cup he just broke.

Blood dripped down his hand.

He said, "I want to prove something. Prove whether I'm alive or dead!"

Lu FengXian immediately turned around.

It's as if he just noticed the existence of Ah Fei.

Then his pupils began to shrink, and a faint smile appeared on the side of his lips. He said, "Good. I'll wait for you too!"

Graveyard.

There are many duels in the martial world every day.
Different people duel in different ways, at different places.

But there are only a few places for life and death duels.

Empty grasslands, woods, graveyards...

Life and death duels almost always take place in one of these places. Because these places carry stench of death.

It's nearly dark. There's fog.

Lu FengXian's robe is white as snow. He stood in front of a gray tombstone. In the fog, he looked like a messenger from the underworld, here to give letters to those about to die.

LingLing stayed by Li XunHuan's side. Her body kept shaking.

Is she cold? Or scared?

Ah Fei suddenly said, "Get out of here!"

LingLing instinctively recoiled, and said, "Me?"

Ah Fei said, "You."

LingLing bit her lips, and looked at Li XunHuan.

Li XunHuan is staring into the distance.

Is his heart far away? Or is the fog too thick?

LingLing lowered her head, and murmured, "I can't listen to your conversations?"

Ah Fei said, "No. No one can hear."

Li XunHuan sighed, and said, "He's accompanied you for several days now. You should accompany him now."

LingLing thought for a moment, then stomped her feet, and yelled, "You didn't want to come here, or stay here. You people are so stupid. All you know is kill... you kill me, I kill you. What's the point of all this? You people don't know why you do this either... If heroes are all like this, I wish all the heroes in the world would die!"

Li XunHuan, Ah Fei, and Lu FengXian all just listened quietly.

Then they quietly let her run away.

Ah Fei didn't even bother to look at her. After he heard the footsteps disappear, he said to Li XunHuan, "I've never requested anything from you, right?"

Li XunHuan said, "You never requested anything from anyone."

Ah Fei said, "But I need a favor from you now."

Li XunHuan said, "Go ahead."

Ah Fei grinded his teeth, and said, "I don't want you to stop me. I must go. If you stop me, I'll... I'll die!"

Li XunHuan's face looked terrible. He said, "But, you really

don't need to do this."

Ah Fei said, "I must do this, because..."

With a painful expression, he continued, "Because Lu FengXian is correct. If I keep this up, I'll be no different from a dead person. I can't let this chance get away."

Li XunHuan said, "Chance?"

Ah Fei said, "If I want to revive, this is my last chance."

Li XunHuan said, "You mean there won't be any more chances later?"

Ah Fei shook his head, and said, "Perhaps there might be. But I... if I lose my confidence today, I'll never have to courage to get back up again!"

When a person has a huge setback, he'll become depressed. Anyone who becomes too depressed, no matter how strong the person, would eventually lose his courage.

Li XunHuan thought for a long time, and sighed. He said, "I know what you mean, but..."

Ah Fei said, "I know I'm not as fast. Because I've found my reflexes becoming slower and slower these past two years."

Li XunHuan said tenderly, "As long as you have the will, everything will eventually be okay again. But now is not the right time."

Ah Fei said, "Now is exactly the right time."

Li XunHuan said, "Now? Why?"

Ah Fei opened up his hand. There are still pieces of the cup stuck in his hand.

Ah Fei said, "Because I suddenly realized something. Pain to the body not only can lessen pain to the mind, but also make a person more alert, more reactive."

He's right. Pain can energize a person's brain. This is just like when one rides a horse. If you smack it with a whip, and make it hurt, the horse will run faster.

Li XunHuan thought for a while, and then said, "You're confident?"

Ah Fei said, "You don't have confidence in me?"

Li XunHuan suddenly laughed. He slapped Ah Fei on the shoulder, and said, "Fine. Go get him!"

Chapter 60: Friendship

Ah Fei remained there for a while, until he couldn't help but ask, "That girl with you... who is she?"

Li XunHuan said, "Her name is LingLing. She is a very unhappy child."

Ah Fei said, "I just know that she's a liar."

Li XunHuan said, "Really?"

Ah Fei said, "She wasn't really waiting for you... And if she was, it's for some other reason."

Li XunHuan said, "Really?"

Ah Fei said, "If she was just there to wait for you, then she would obviously be very concerned about you."

Li XunHuan said, "Perhaps..."

Ah Fei cut him off, "Looking at you, anyone would've realized just how much you had suffered. Yet she never asked how you turned out like this."

Li XunHuan said, "Perhaps she hasn't had a chance."

Ah Fei said, "If she really cared about you, she wouldn't need a 'chance' to ask about you."

Li XunHuan thought for a while, and then chuckled. He said, "You're afraid that I might be tricked by this girl?"

Ah Fei said, "I just know she's not telling the truth."

Li XunHuan laughed, and said, "If you want to live a bit happier, then you should never expect women to tell you the truth."

Ah Fei said, "You think all women lie?"

Li XunHuan seemingly didn't want to answer this question. He said, "If you're smart, never reveal to a woman that you've seen through her lies. Because no matter what you say, she'll have a good explanation waiting. Even if you don't believe her explanation, she still won't admit that she's lying."

He chuckled, and continued, "Therefore, if you meet a woman who lies, the best thing to do is to pretend that you believe her lies. Otherwise, you're just asking for it."

Ah Fei stared at Li XunHuan, for a long, long time.

Li XunHuan said, "Is there anything else you want to say?"

Ah Fei suddenly laughed, and said, "Even if I do, there's no need to say them. Because you already know everything I want to say."

Looking at Ah Fei's back, Li XunHuan felt a great deal of happiness surging from his heart. This proud youngster did not falter.

This time, he said many things, but never mentioned Lin

XianEr.

After all, love can't truly control a man's whole life.

Ah Fei certainly is a true man.

When a true man is being humiliated, he would rather never see the woman he loves, rather live a life of a loner, rather die.

Because he wouldn't be able to face her.

But can Ah Fei really defeat Lu FengXian?

If he loses, even if Lu FengXian doesn't kill him, can he still live?

Li XunHuan bent down, and began to cough.

He coughed up blood.

Lu FengXian stood there, waiting. He did not speak.

This person is quite patient.

A patient enemy is a deadly enemy.

Ah Fei suddenly ripped off a piece of his shirt, and covered the wound on his hand.

That piece of wine cup sunk further into his body.

Blood, even in the dense fog, is still bright red!

Only fresh blood can bring forth one's primal strength from within. Other things, such as love or hate, can also

accomplish such things. But blood is the most direct method.

Ah Fei seemingly returned to the wilderness.

‘If you want to live, then your enemy must die.’

Lu FengXian watched as Ah Fei came closer. He suddenly felt an indescribable force bearing down.

He felt that the person coming closer isn’t really human, but rather a beast.

A wounded beast!

“The difference between a friend and an enemy, is like the difference between life and death.”

“If someone wants you dead, then you must kill him first. There is no other option!”

This is the law of the wilderness! It’s also the method for survival.

‘Mercy’ is never applicable in this environment.

The blood dripped down, continuously. Ah Fei’s every muscle shook from the pain. Except his hand, which became more and more still.

His gaze became colder and colder.

Lu FengXian could never understand how this youngster could change so quickly.

But he does understand Ah Fei’s sword art.

The key to Ah Fei's sword art is not 'fast' or 'cruelty', but rather 'secretive' and 'accurate'.

His first blow must be lethal, at the very least with 70% chance of success.

That's why he must 'wait'!

Wait until his opponent reveals his weakness, an opportunity for him to strike. Ah Fei can wait longer than most people in the world.

However, Lu FengXian is determined not to give him this opportunity.

Lu FengXian looked like he's just standing there casually, as if his whole body is filled with weaknesses, open to attack. Ah Fei's sword seemingly can strike every single part of his body.

But when one has too many weaknesses, he actually has none.

Because his whole body has become totally flexible.

This 'flexibility' is the highest form of martial arts.

Li XunHuan looked at him from afar, his eyes filled with anxiety.

Lu FengXian has good reason to be arrogant.

Li XunHuan was shocked to see how high his kung fu was. He couldn't see how Ah Fei could beat him... because Ah Fei doesn't have a chance to strike.

Deeper into the night.

Suddenly, a light appeared on the grassy plains, wildfire!

The wind came from the west. Lu FengXian's face just happened to be facing west.

The wind blew by, carrying a bit of the fire towards Lu FengXian's face.

Lu FengXian's eyes suddenly blinked, his left hand moved slightly, as if trying to brush off this bit of fire, but quickly stopped.

In a duel of life and death, any unnecessary movement could be dangerous.

But although his hand barely moved, his left arm's muscles had already tensed from this 'intention of moving'. Unable for him to maintain his total flexibility.

Although this isn't the best opportunity, it is still better than no opportunity.

Ah Fei would never let an opportunity pass up.

His sword came out!

This attack is so extremely important.

Ah Fei's whole life depended on the success of this attack.

If he succeeds, then he'll return to his former self, cleansing himself of the terrible previous defeat.

If this attack fails, then he'll never again get his confidence back. Even if he's alive, he'd probably be better off dead.

He must succeed. He cannot fail.

But can he really succeed?

A streaking light flashed, then stopped!

The sword broke.

Ah Fei stepped back a step. Only a broken sword remained in his hand.

The other piece of the sword rested between Lu FengXian's fingers, but the sword tip had penetrated Lu FengXian's shoulder.

Although he managed to block Ah Fei's sword, Lu FengXian was unfortunately, a little late.

Blood poured down Lu FengXian's shoulder.

Ah Fei really did succeed.

A strange glow seemingly appeared on Ah Fei's face... the glow of victory.

Lu FengXian's face remained expressionless. He only glared at Ah Fei. The broken sword remained stuck on his shoulder, but he did not draw it out.

Ah Fei stood there motionless. He seemingly does not care to attack again.

For all his frustrations were dissipated after his first attack.

He only wanted “victory”, not to “kill”.

Lu FengXian looked like he’s still waiting for Ah Fei to attack again. After a long time, he finally said, “Good. Very good!” Anyone would feel happy, feel proud after hearing such a compliment from a man like Lu FengXian.

But before he left, Lu FengXian suddenly added something else.

“Li XunHuan really was telling the truth. He also did not misjudge you!”

What did he mean? What did Li XunHuan say to him?

Lu FengXian finally disappeared into the night.

Li XunHuan smiled.

He patted Ah Fei on the shoulders, and said with a smile, “See, you’re still you. I told you nothing could keep you down. Remember, everyone has his bad times. Do not let such things affect you.”

He then added, “Now you can start anew. I have confidence in you...”

Ah Fei suddenly cut him off, said, “You think I’ll never lose again?”

Li XunHuan smiled, and said, “Lu FengXian’s abilities are second to none. If he can’t even dodge your sword, then who could?”

Ah Fei said, “But... I felt like I didn’t really win.”

Li XunHuan said, "What do you mean?"

Ah Fei said, "I'm not as fast as I used to be."

Li XunHuan said, "Who told you this?"

Ah Fei said, "No one needs to tell me. I can feel it myself..."

His eyes still gazed at where Lu FengXian had disappeared, and continued, "I felt as if he could've beaten me. He shouldn't have been so slow."

Li XunHuan said, "It's possible that he's actually more powerful than you. But you chose the best opportunity to strike. That's where you're better than him. That's why you won!"

He chuckled, and continued, "That's why Lu FengXian lost, and did not complain. How could you still not have confidence after his compliments?"

Ah Fei finally smiled.

To a man who had gone through so much hardships, what's more important than encouragements from a friend?

Li XunHuan said, "No matter what, we should celebrate this event.. What do you think we should do?"

Ah Fei said, "We should drink, of course. What else can we do?"

Li XunHuan laughed, and said, "You're right. Of course we should drink. A celebration without wine is like an exquisite dish lacking salt..."

Ah Fei said with a smile, "Actually, such a celebration would taste even worse than a dish lacking salt."

Ah Fei fell asleep.

Wine, is a strange drink. Sometimes it makes a person happy, sometimes it makes them go to sleep.

Ah Fei had barely slept the past few days. Yet he still woke up soon after falling asleep. He wondered why he could sleep for so long back at home.

Once Ah Fei's asleep, Li XunHuan left the inn.

Soon he found another inn. He entered the yard of this inn.

What's he doing here in the middle of the night?

It's past midnight, yet one room still has a candle lit.

Li XunHuan gently knocked on the door. A person inside immediately said, "Little Li Tan Hua?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

The door opened. Lu FengXian opened the door.

Why is he here? How come Li XunHuan knew that he'd be here? What's the purpose of this visit?

Did they make some sort of secret arrangements?

A distant and strange smile appeared on Lu FengXian's face. He said coldly, "Li Tan Hua truly is a man of his word! You have come."

A little girl's voice followed, "I told you that he'd keep any promise he made."

This little girl is none other than LingLing.

Why is LingLing here with Lu FengXian?

What did Li XunHuan promise?

Li XunHuan slowly entered the room. He suddenly bowed in front of Lu FengXian, and said, "Thank you."

Lu FengXian said, "No need to thank me. Because this is just a deal between us."

Li XunHuan said, "But this is a deal that not all people would accept. So I still should thank you."

Lu FengXian said, "This really is a strange deal. I was shocked when you asked LingLing to tell me about it."

Li XunHuan said, "That's why I asked her to explain it to you."

Lu FengXian said, "Actually, there was no need for explanation. You want me to lose to Ah Fei, because you want him to regain his confidence."

Li XunHuan said, "That was indeed my intent. I feel he is worthy."

Lu FengXian said, "That's because you're his friend. I'm not... I never thought anyone would ever ask me to do such a ridiculous thing."

Li XunHuan said, "But you still did it."

Lu FengXian stared at Li XunHuan intently, and said, "You were confident that I would agree to your deal?"

Li XunHuan chuckled, and said, "At least I knew there was a chance, because I saw that you're not an ordinary person. Only an extraordinary person can do such an extraordinary thing."

Lu FengXian continued to stare at Li XunHuan, and said, "You were also certain that Ah Fei would not kill me."

Li XunHuan said, "I knew that once he won, even just by an inch, he would not press further."

Lu FengXian suddenly sighed, and said, "You really did not misjudge him, nor me."

He suddenly snickered, "But I only agreed to let him win one exchange. Had he attacked again, I would've taken his life."

Li XunHuan's eyes brightened, and said, "You are that confident?"

Lu FengXian said, "You don't believe me?"

The two pair of eyes met each other. After a long time, Li XunHuan suddenly smiled, and said, "Perhaps you can now, but not in the future."

Lu FengXian said, "That's why perhaps I should not have agreed to this deal. Leaving him alive is a threat to me."

Li XunHuan said, "But some people likes to feel threatened, because it gives them excitement, forcing them to improve."

A person that's truly 'invincible' would lead a very dull life."

Lu FengXian thought for a long time, before he said,
"Perhaps... but I did not agree for this reason."

Li XunHuan said, "Of course not."

Lu FengXian said, "I agreed, because I like what you have to
give me in return."

Li XunHuan said, "Of course."

Lu FengXian said, "You told me that as long as I do this,
you'll return any favor I ask."

Li XunHuan said, "That's correct."

Chapter 61 : Favor

Lu FengXian suddenly let out an expression of loneliness...
When someone's lonely, then he must wish for friendship.
Unfortunately, true friendship is not attainable by everyone.

Lu FengXian said coldly, "What you're saying is, you can die for him, and he can die for you, right?"

Li XunHuan said, "Yes."

Lu FengXian said, "But you knew that I wouldn't kill you. At least, I won't kill you this way, right?"

Li XunHuan remained silent.

Lu FengXian glared at Li XunHuan, before he finally relaxed. He said, "I am indeed not going to kill you... Do you know why?"

Li XunHuan still did not respond. Lu FengXian continued, "Because I want you to forever be indebted to me, forever feel like you owe me..."

He actually smiled, and said, "Because if I want to kill you, there will be plenty of opportunities later. But I'll never have this kind of chance again."

What does he mean? Is he trying to obtain Li XunHuan's friendship?

Li XunHuan thought for a long time, before he smiled.
“Actually, you’ll have another chance.”

Lu FengXian said, “Really?”

Li XunHuan said, “I want to ask you to do something else.”

Lu FengXian stared at him, as if he had never seen this person before. After a long time, Lu FengXian finally said, “You haven’t paid for the first deal yet. And you’re now asking me to do something else?”

Li XunHuan said, “This isn’t another deal. I am asking for a favor.”

Lu FengXian’s face looked gloomy, but his eyes shined. He said, “If it’s not a deal, why should I do it?”

Li XunHuan smiled. It was a serene, honest smile.

He looked at Lu FengXian intently, and said, “Because ‘I’ am asking for this favor.”

This sentence seemed quite odd, not to mention quite arrogant.

This is not something one would expect Li XunHuan to say.

Yet Lu FengXian did not get mad. Instead, he felt a strange warmth in his heart. Because he realized that Li XunHuan’s extending out his friendship.

Perhaps such friendship is the only brightness in a person’s lonely life.

This brightness will never extinguish. For as long as humanity lives on, there will be endless supply of friendship.

Lu FengXian said, “Everyone else said that Li XunHuan never ask for any favors, yet he just asked me a favor. Looks like I should be honored.

Li XunHuan smiled, and said, “Since I already owe you, it’s no big deal to owe you some more.”

Lu FengXian laughed. This time, a true laugh.

He said, “Someone once said, the most important thing a businessman learns is how to obtain favors. Looks like you’d make a good businessman.”

Li XunHuan said, “So you’ll do it?”

Lu FengXian sighed, and said, “I can’t think of a reason to reject you. Better take this opportunity to quickly say your request.”

Li XunHuan coughed a few times, and changed to a serious expression. He said, “Had you met Ah Fei a few years back, even without my request, he would’ve beaten you.”

Lu FengXian did not speak. Does he agree to this statement?

Li XunHuan said, “Had you met him back then, you would’ve seen a totally different person.”

Lu FengXian said, “How could he change so quickly in two years?”

Li XunHuan sighed, and said, “Because he met a person.”

Lu FengXian said, "A woman?"

Li XunHuan said, "Of course a woman. Only a woman can truly change a man."

Lu FengXian said, "He didn't change. He's just in a funk. Anyone who's in a funk because of a woman shouldn't be pitied. He should be laughed at."

Li XunHuan sighed again, and said, "Perhaps you are right. But you haven't met this woman."

Lu FengXian said, "What difference does it make?"

Li XunHuan said, "If you had met her, you might turn out just like Ah Fei."

Lu FengXian said, "You think I'm some little kid who has never seen a woman before?"

Li XunHuan said, "You might've seen all sorts of woman. But she... she's different from everyone else."

Lu FengXian said, "Really?"

Li XunHuan said, "Someone used a very good phrase to describe her... She looks like a goddess, but she takes people down to Hell."

Lu FengXian's eyes flickered. He suddenly said, "I know who you're talking about."

Li XunHuan said, "You should've guessed. There's only one such person like her in this world. Thankfully, just one, or I'd shudder to think what would happen to all the men in this world."

Lu FengXian said, "Regarding this person, I've heard many rumors about her."

Li XunHuan said, "Ah Fei has finally regained his form. I can't bear to see him revert back. That's why..."

Lu FengXian said, "You want me to kill her?"

Li XunHuan said, "I just want Ah Fei to never see her again. Because once he sees her, he wouldn't be able to help himself."

Lu FengXian thought for a while, then said, "You can do this yourself."

Li XunHuan said, "I can't."

Lu FengXian said, "Why not?"

Li XunHuan said, "Because if Ah Fei ever finds out, he'd hate me for the rest of his life."

Lu FengXian said, "But he should understand that this is for his benefit." Li XunHuan said, "No matter how smart a person is, he'll become an instant idiot when it comes to love."

Lu FengXian thought some more, before he said, "Why can't you ask someone else to do this? Why me?"

Li XunHuan said, "Because even if someone else can defeat her, he probably wouldn't have the heart to kill her. Because..."

He raised his head, looked at Lu FengXian, and said, "Also, I

have a hard time finding someone I can ask for favors.”

The two pair of eyes met. Lu FengXian’s heart was suddenly filled with warmth.

He could see from Li XunHuan’s eyes, his sadness and his loneliness.

The loneliness and sadness that only heroes have.

This is something only heroes can understand.

Lu FengXian suddenly said, “Where is she?”

Li XunHuan said, “LingLing knows where she is. But…”

LingLing had passed out. She still hasn’t woken up yet.

Li XunHuan glanced at her, and said, “You might not be able to get her to tell you the location.”

Lu FengXian smiled, and said, “Don’t worry. I have my ways.”

* * *

Ah Fei woke up. Li XunHuan had gone to sleep.

Even while sleeping, he kept coughing. Every time he coughed, his whole body shook in pain.

The sun slowly rose outside the window.

Ah Fei suddenly saw that he now has many more white hairs, many more wrinkles.

Only his eyes are still young.

Every time he sleeps, he would look very old, very fragile.

His robe is very dirty.

Who could imagine, that inside such a shell, exists extreme determination, a noble character, and an amazing spirit?

Ah Fei looked at him. Tears came down Ah Fei's eyes.

He lives only to suffer through torment... different forms of torment, agony.

But he did not fall! He also never felt that life is dark and gloomy.

As long as he lives, there will be warmth, there will be light.

He will always give happiness to others, leaving the sadness to himself.

Ah Fei's tears continue to fall.

Li XunHuan continued to sleep soundly.

To him, sleep has turned into a luxury.

Ah Fei suddenly wants to go back home, in a hurry to see that beautiful face. But doesn't want to wake him up. So Ah Fei quietly opened the door, and quietly walked out.

It's early in the morning. The sun just rose over the rooftops. Those traveling in a hurry had already left the inn, so the courtyard is very quiet. Only a parasol tree remains, standing alone amidst the cold late-autumn wind.

Li XunHuan seems just like this tree. Despite knowing that

autumn is over, and winter's coming, they still wouldn't give up, not until the last possible moment.

Ah Fei sighed. He slowly walked out the courtyard.

The leaves on the parasol tree had begun to wither. One by one, they fell to the ground. In front of his eyes, onto his body...

* * *

The fire is still burning. The soybean soup slowly simmered.

Ah Fei never ate very fast. He allowed the soup to slowly enter his mouth, slowly flowing down into his stomach. When a person's stomach is full, he'll feel much more energized.

He likes this feeling.

The nightshift employee finally found some spare time. He sat down by the fire, drinking some wine slowly.

This is just some leftover wine, already cold. Yet the employee found it quite satisfying.

He's happy, because he's satisfied.

Only someone truly satisfied can find real happiness.

Ah Fei had always admired these people. He wanted to go drink with this person.

But he controlled himself.

"Perhaps, I might get to see her..."

He doesn't want her to smell any alcohol on his body.

The majority of the people in this world live their lives for others... some for their loved ones, some for their enemies. Both types live agonizing lives.

There are very few people in this world who are truly happy.

The wind is blowing very hard. The dusts danced along with the wind. Not many people are walking on the street.

Ah Fei raised his head, and looked out the door. Two people just happened to pass by.

These two people didn't walk very fast, but they looked to be in a hurry. Their minds are only on the road in front of them, and nothing else.

The person walking in the front is a smallish, white-haired old man. He holds a pipe in one hand. His blue robe is now almost white.

A little girl followed him. Her eyes are very big, her ponytails very long.

Ah Fei recognize these two people. He saw them two years ago. They are the "old storyteller" and his granddaughter. He also remembered that their surname is Sun.

But they did not see Ah Fei.

Had they seen Ah Fei, perhaps everything would've turned out differently.

Ah Fei finished his soup. He raised his head again, only to

see another person walking by.

This person is very tall. He wears a yellow robe, a large bamboo hat, tilted so low it's hard to see his face. He walked in a very strange manner. He also seemed to be in a hurry, and didn't turn around to look at Ah Fei.

Ah Fei's heart jumped.

Jin WuMing!

Jin WuMing's eyes stared straight ahead, as if he's following that old storyteller. He did not notice Ah Fei.

However, Ah Fei noticed him, and the sword on his waist. But Ah Fei didn't see that severed arm, the severed arm wrapped in cloth.

Because once Ah Fei saw the sword, he could not see anything else.

Because this sword gave him his first taste of defeat.

Because this sword almost ruined him.

Ah Fei clenched his fist. The wound on his palm reopened. Blood came out. His whole body tensed from the pain.

He forgot about Jin WuMing's severed arm.

He only wants to challenge Jin WuMing again. That is his only wish.

Jin WuMing quickly walked passed the door.

Ah Fei stood up. He clenched his fist tighter.

The more pain, the higher his awareness.

The employee suddenly felt an indescribable coldness surrounding him. Turning around, he saw Ah Fei's eyes.

A pair of fiery eyes, but they make those who see them feel icy cold. The worker's wine bowl fell out of his hand.

But the bowl did not land on the ground. Ah Fei suddenly stretched out his hand, catching it in midair.

No one could see how he caught the bowl.

The worker was scared senseless.

Ah Fei slowly put the wine bowl on the table. He poured out a cup of wine, and drank the whole cup.

A great deal of confidence surged from within his heart.

At this moment, another person passed by the door.

This person also wears a yellow robe, and a bamboo hat, tilted very low in front. He also walked in a very strange manner.

ShangGuan Fei!

Ah Fei doesn't know who ShangGuan Fei is. But he immediately realized that this person and Jin WuMing are close. And that he is secretly following Jin WuMing.

ShangGuan Fei is a bit shorter than Jin WuMing, and a bit younger. Yet that cold expression, that walking style. It's as if they're brothers.

Why is he following Jin WuMing?

This is a pretty desolate place.

Ah Fei walked very fast, but he remained a safe distance behind ShangGuan Fei.

The old storyteller is long gone. Jin WuMing looked like a yellow shadow. But ShangGuan Fei still walked slowly, not in a hurry.

Ah Fei realized that this youngster also knows how to follow someone.

To follow someone in secret, one must have lots of patience.

There's a small hill in front. Jin WuMing had just walked halfway around it.

ShangGuan Fei picked up his pace. As if he wants to catch up to Jin WuMing on the other side of the hill.

When he disappeared over the hill, Ah Fei ran up the hill as fast as he could.

He knew that once on the top of the hill, he'd see something very interesting.

He wasn't disappointed.

Jin WuMing had never felt fear before... After all, what's there to fear when you aren't even afraid of death?

But now, for some reason, Jin WuMing's eyes carried a sense of fear.

What's he afraid of?

Chapter 62: Major Secret

Over the hill, is an even more desolate place. The autumn wind blows mercilessly.

Jin WuMing's hand suddenly touched the sword's handle... but this is his right hand, not the hand he used to hold the sword with. In this hand, the sword cannot be considered a killing weapon.

He touched the handle, then removed his hand from it.

His steps slowed down, until they stopped. As if this is near the end of the road.

At this moment, he heard the laughter of ShangGuan Fei.

ShangGuan Fei caught up to him, snickered, and said, "Stop with this charade."

Jin WuMing turned his head. His eyes betrayed no emotions. They stared intently upon ShangGuan Fei. After a while, he finally said, "You think this is a charade?"

ShangGuan Fei said, "Of course it's all a charade. You purposely act like you're following Old Man Sun, because there's no point for you to truly follow them."

Jin WuMing said, "If so, then why am I following them?"

ShangGuan Fei said, "Because of me."

Jin WuMing said, "You?"

ShangGuan Fei said, "You've known for a while that I was following you."

Jin WuMing said coldly, "That's because you are terrible at following people."

ShangGuan Fei said, "Maybe so. But I'm good enough to kill you. Of course, you should know that I'm here to kill you."

Jin WuMing does know, which is why he wasn't surprised.

Ah Fei was the person surprised.

These two are obviously from the same group. Why would they want to kill each other?

ShangGuan Fei said, "Ten years ago, I've wanted to kill you. Do you know why?"

Jin WuMing did not respond... He only asks questions, never responds to them.

ShangGuan Fei suddenly became agitated. His eyes filled with venom, and yelled, "If you didn't exist, then I would have led a better life. Not only did you take my place, but also took away my father. After you came, you took everything in my life."

Jin WuMing said coldly, "You have only yourself to blame. I've always been better than you."

ShangGuan Fei clenched his teeth, and said, "You know,

deep in your heart, that isn't the true reason. The true reason is..."

ShangGuan Fei tried to control himself, but failed. He yelled angrily, "Because you are my father's bastard son. My mother died because of the anger your mother caused."

Jin WuMing's cold, gray eyes suddenly shrunk, like two drops of blood.

Two drops of dry blood that had changed color.

On the hill, a painful expression also appeared on Ah Fei's face. Seemingly the same kind as Jin WuMing's, except perhaps even worse.

ShangGuan Fei said, "You two had deceived me all these years. Do you really think I don't know?"

When he said 'you two', he obviously meant Jin WuMing and his father.

When ShangGuan Fei said this, he did not hurt anyone else, just himself.

He felt even more painful, which made him calmer. ShangGuan Fei continued, "I knew everything the day he took you in. Ever since that day, I've been waiting for a chance to kill you."

Jin WuMing said coldly, "You didn't have many chances."

ShangGuan Fei said, "Even if I had the opportunity back then, I couldn't have kill you. You were still useful back then. But not anymore."

He snickered, and said, "At that time, you were a sword in my father's eyes, a sword for killing. He would never forgive me if I destroyed his weapon. But now, you are nothing but scrap metal. He'll never care about your life or death ever again."

Jin WuMing thought for a long time, and nodded. He said, "You're right. Even I don't care about my own life and death. Why should he?"

ShangGuan Fei said, "Others might believe your lie, but I don't."

Jin WuMing said, "I'm lying to you?"

ShangGuan Fei said, "If you really aren't afraid of death, then why do you keep running away?"

Jin WuMing said, "Running away?"

ShangGuan Fei said, "Your little charade of trying to follow Old Man Sun. It's obviously a cover up for trying to run away."

Jin WuMing said, "Really?"

ShangGuan Fei said, "If you had been following anyone else, I would've let you keep following them. To see if you want to know where they're going, or waiting to kill them. Then I'd kill you afterwards."

He laughed, and continued, "Unfortunately, you picked the wrong person. Because you can't possibly find out where he's going, much less to kill him. You're not worthy of following him, because you're simply no match for him!"

Jin WuMing suddenly smiled. He said, "Perhaps..."

He smiled in a strange manner, as if he's holding some little secret.

ShangGuan Fei didn't notice. He continued, "That's why you're just trying to cover up for something else. You wanted to delay me from killing you."

He then stared intently at Jin WuMing, and yelled, "Because you're now afraid of death."

Jin WuMing said, "Afraid of death?"

ShangGuan Fei said, "You weren't afraid to die before, because no one could've killed you back then."

With a sound of 'Ding', a pair of Dragon & Phoenix Rings popped into his hands. ShangGuan Fei said coldly, "But now, I can kill you any time I wish."

Jin WuMing remained silent for a long time, before he said, "Looks like you seem to know everything."

ShangGuan Fei said, "At least I'm a lot smarter than you think I am."

Jin WuMing suddenly laughed. He said, "Unfortunately, there's still one thing you don't know."

ShangGuan Fei said, "What?"

Jin WuMing said, "It really doesn't matter whether or not you know anything else. But if you don't know this, then you must die!"

ShangGuan Fei said coldly, “If it’s this important, then I must know about it.”

Jin WuMing said, “Ah, but you can’t know about this. Because this is my secret. I’ve never told anyone..”

ShangGuan Fei said, “Are you preparing to tell me this secret?”

Jin WuMing said, “Yes. I’m going to tell you right now. But under one condition.”

ShangGuan Fei said, “What?”

Jin WuMing said, “If I tell you, then you must die!”

ShangGuan Fei stared at him, and suddenly began to laugh.

Jin WuMing’s words really are something to laugh about.

How could a cripple kill someone?

ShangGuan Fei said in between his laughter, “What are you going to kill me with? Are you going to bite me to death?”

Jin WuMing’s answer is very short, very sweet, just one word.

“No.”

ShangGuan Fei’s laughter subsided a little.

With such a respond, Jin WuMing seemingly was not trying to scare anyone, nor kidding.

Jin WuMing said, “When I kill, I use this hand!”

His raised his hand, his right hand.

ShangGuan Fei's still laughing, but not as natural as earlier. He said, "This hand... can't even kill a dog."

Jin WuMing said, "I only kill people, never dogs!"

ShangGuan Fei suddenly stopped laughing. His Dragon & Phoenix Rings shot out of his hand.

The saying goes, 'An inch shorter, An inch more dangerous', Dragon & Phoenix Rings is one of the dangerous weapons to use in the martial world. This move, "Dragon Encircles Phoenix Dances as Both Fly" is one of the most dangerous techniques for Dragon & Phoenix Rings users. Unless one is near defeat, or knows that his opponent cannot block the move, he should never use it.

Once used, the opponent can almost never block it.

At this moment, the beam of sword light flew out.

The sword, in a flash, entered ShangGuan Fei's throat.

The sword tip penetrated seventy percent of the neck.

ShangGuan Fei seemingly still has his breath. Veins appeared on his forehead. His eyeballs about to burst out, staring at Jin WuMing.

Even in death, he couldn't believe how Jin WuMing's sword came out.

Jin WuMing looked at him coldly, and said, "My right hand is even faster than my left hand. This is my secret!"

The sword came out. Blood sprayed everywhere.

ShangGuan Fei still stared at Jin WuMing, filled with disbelief, with sorrow, with shock...

He still wouldn't believe, not even in death.

Yet he must believe.

The Dragon & Phoenix Rings that came out of ShangGuan Fei's hand landed on Jin WuMing's left arm.

The broken arm.

He used this broken arm to block ShangGuan Fei's rings, then followed up with an attack using the right hand. The sword immediately entered ShangGuan Fei's throat.

What a cunning attack.

This strike is so accurate! So deadly! So fast! So ruthless!

"My right hand is faster than my left hand. This is my secret!"

He did not lie.

Yet the truth is so unbelievable, so incredible.

ShangGuan Fei had been with Jin WuMing for over ten years. Not once did ShangGuan Fei see him practice right-handed sword skills. That's why even in death, he could not understand how Jin WuMing managed to learn his right-handed sword art.

But he must believe, because 'death' has proven this truth.

Jin WuMing looked at the body. He looked a bit disappointed.

After a long time, he softly sighed, and said, “Why did you need to kill me? Why did I need to kill you? ...”

He turned around, and walked away.

He still walked in that odd way, as if trying to synchronize with something.

That pair of rings still stuck to his left arm.

Doubt, shock, disbelief.

These were Ah Fei’s feelings at this time.

Jin WuMing’s sword art really is scary. It may not be faster than his, but certainly deadlier, more secretive.

“Will I really never be able to defeat him?”

Even if this is the truth, it’s something Ah Fei cannot tolerate!

Looking at Jin WuMing’s back, Ah Fei suddenly felt a surge of adrenaline within his body. He desperately wanted to jump down the hill and catch up.

But at this moment, a hand grabbed him from behind.

This is a very firm hand, filled with strength.

Ah Fei turned around, and immediately saw Li XunHuan’s gentle, friendly eyes.

What really held Ah Fei back weren’t this hand, but these

eyes.

Ah Fei lowered his head, and sighed. He said, "Perhaps he really is simply better than me."

Li XunHuan said, "You're only worse than him in one aspect."

Ah Fei said, "What?"

Li XunHuan said, "In order to kill, Jin WuMing can do anything, even give up his own life. You cannot."

Ah Fei thought for a long time, and then said, "You're right. I can't."

Li XunHuan said, "You can't, because you have emotions. Your sword art may be ruthless, but you are a sentimental person."

Ah Fei said, "That's why... I can never defeat him?"

Li XunHuan shook his head, said, "Wrong, you most definitely can defeat him."

Ah Fei did not cut in. He kept on listening.

Li XunHuan continued, "With emotions, one can have life. With life, one can have a soul, can change."

Ah Fei thought for a while longer, before he slowly nodded. He said, "I understand now."

Li XunHuan said, "But this isn't the most important thing."

Ah Fei said, "Then what is?"

Li XunHuan said, "What's important is that you don't need to kill him. You can't kill him."

Ah Fei said, "Why don't I need to kill him?"

Li XunHuan said, "Because he's already dead. Why kill him again?"

Ah Fei said, "You're right. His heart is already dead... so I don't need to kill him. But how come I can't kill him?"

Li XunHuan did not answer. Instead he asked, "Do you know why he would practice such a sword art in secret?"

Ah Fei said, "What do you think?"

Li XunHuan said, "If I guessed correctly, it's because of ShangGuan JinHong."

Ah Fei said, "He fought against ShangGuan Fei's Dragon & Phoenix Rings head on. He wanted to find a way to defeat Dragon & Phoenix Rings."

Li XunHuan said, "My thoughts exactly."

Ah Fei said, "That way... should ShangGuan JinHong ever change his attitude towards Jin WuMing, Jin WuMing could use this to kill ShangGuan JinHong."

Li XunHuan said, "Perhaps he'll fail. But at least he can try."

Ah Fei stopped talking. His eyes became more relaxed.

He looked like he's trying to hide something.

Li XunHuan said, "The reason ShangGuan JinHong's Dragon

& Phoenix Rings can rank number two on the book of weapons, is not because of it's deadliness, deception, but because of it's 'certainty'.

Ah Fei said, "Certainty?"

Li XunHuan said, "To be able to practice the world's most dangerous weapon to the point of 'certainty', is what puts ShangGuan JinHong above others. ShangGuan Fei is not even close to his father's ability."

Ah Fei said, "Really?"

Li XunHuan said, "ShangGuan Fei hates Jin WuMing, mainly because ShangGuan Fei thought his dad didn't teach him the top level secrets. And instead taught them to Jin WuMing."

Ah Fei said, "Hmm."

Li XunHuan said, "If ShangGuan JinHong won't use the dangerous 'Dragon Encircles Phoenix Dances as Both Fly' technique, there's very little chance that Jin WuMing can kill him."

Ah Fei said, "You're right."

Li XunHuan said, "But ShangGuan JinHong just might use it, because he knows that Jin WuMing's left arm is now broken. So there's no need to be cautious. Therefore, Jin WuMing still has a chance to defeat him."

Ah Fei looked like he just woke up from a dream, and yelled, "But, no matter what, ShangGuan JinHong is Jin WuMing's father."

Li XunHuan said, "There's no such possibility."

Ah Fei said, "But didn't ShangGuan Fei just..."

Li XunHuan cut him off, said, "That's just ShangGuan Fei's guess. It's a wrong guess."

Ah Fei said, "If so, then why did he say those things? Was he lying?"

Li XunHuan said, "Of course he wasn't lying. It's just that he misinterpreted the events."

Ah Fei said, "Misinterpreted?"

Li XunHuan said, "He said that after Jin WuMing arrived, his father became cold towards him. This is certainly true. But he doesn't know that his father did this out of love."

Ah Fei said, "How can ShangGuan JinHong become cold to him out of love?"

Li XunHuan said, "Because ShangGuan JinHong was intent on making Jin WuMing his murder weapon. You could say that Jin WuMing's life died in his hands."

Ah Fei thought for a moment, then said, "You're right. If a man only lives to kill, then he must lead a very miserable life."

Li XunHuan said, "That's why Jin WuMing died the moment he met ShangGuan JinHong."

He continued, "But ShangGuan JinHong is also a person. Every person loves his son, and would not subject his son to this kind of torture. Therefore, ShangGuan JinHong did not

teach his top kung fu to ShangGuan Fei.”

He laughed, and said, “Too bad ShangGuan Fei never understood his father’s true intentions.”

Ah Fei suddenly said, “Therefore ShangGuan Fei actually died in his father’s hands too.”

Li XunHuan said, “When someone desires too much, he’s likely going to make many mistakes..”

Chapter 63: A Severing of Relationships

An autumn forest, a dried and withered forest.

Just past this decayed forest lies a remote and secluded path. Ah Fei pointed at a light at the far end of the road and said, "That is my home."

Home.

This word in the ears of Li XunHuan is a totally foreign and unfamiliar word.

Ah Fei, with his eyes still focused on the light in the distance continued, "The lamps are still lit, she must not be asleep yet."

In the small house, there was a bright lamp, a thick cotton dress, and the fluttering eyebrows of a beautiful woman. She sat diligently sewing clothes under the lamp light, patiently waiting for her most intimate person to return to her side.

What an extremely beautiful picture.

Just the thought of this picture filled Ah Fei's heart with sweet longing and warmth, and those pair of razor sharp eyes became soft and gentle.

He had always been a solitary and lonely person, but now,

he knows that there is someone waiting for him ... the person he loves the most in the world is waiting for him.

This feeling is definitely a joyous one, a feeling that is incomparable to any other, a feeling that can't be replaced by anything else in the world.

Li XunHuan's heart sunk.

Seeing the that look of happiness on Ah Fei's face, he couldn't help but feel guilty.

He originally had not intended to disappoint Ah Fei. He couldn't imagine what Ah Fei's reaction would be when Ah Fei discovered that Lin XianEr wasn't there.

Although what he was doing was for Ah Fei's own good, to allow him to live on happily and righteously like a true man, Li XunHuan still felt that in some way he was wronging his friend.

"A long sadness cannot compare to a short one."

Li XunHuan just hoped that Ah Fei would recover quickly from the sadness that was to come, and would quickly forget all about her as well. She wasn't worth his love and wasn't worth his moping over.

Unfortunately, people always fall in love with those whom they shouldn't fall in love with. Because emotions are like an unbridled horse, completely uncontrollable and inescapable. This is one of the saddest truths of being human. And because of this, there is no end to the tragedies that befall us all.

The lamp is bright, and the door is slightly opened. Light

seeps through the crack and illuminates the path outside. The road was soaked with rain from the night before and under the lamp light were a track of disordered footprints. They were the footprints of a man.

"Who has come here before?" Ah Fei said as he furrowed his brow, but slowly he became at ease again.

He had always trusted Lin XianEr. He believed that she would never do anything to betray that trust.

Li XunHuan followed him from a short distance as if he was afraid of stepping foot inside that house.

Ah Fei turned around and said smilingly, "I hope the stew that she is cooking tonight doesn't have any bamboo shoots in it. You can try a little and you'll discover that her skills in the kitchen are even better than her skills with the blade."

Li XunHuan smiled in response. Who would have known that this smile was full of so much grief?

The big bowl of beef rib soup really didn't have bamboo shoots in it. Li XunHuan just couldn't figure out her secret. Perhaps what happens today will really be completely different.

Li XunHuan simply couldn't imagine how a woman could use such cruel methods to deceive someone who loved and cared for her so much.

"But how am I any different, I'm deceiving him as well." Li XunHuan thought to himself.

"Why can't I just tell him honestly, that Lin XianEr is no longer here, and that it was all my idea." Li XunHuan bent

down and let out an agonizing cough.

Ah Fei looked back at him and said, "If only you were willing to live with me here for some time, that cough of yours would go away. Because there is no wine here, only soup."

But he would never know just how damaging that "soup" was to his body, much more damaging than any wine could ever be.

Not a single sound could be heard from inside the house.

"She must be in the kitchen. Otherwise, she would have definitely come out to welcome you." Ah Fei said.

Li XunHuan didn't answer him because he just didn't know what he should say.

Finally the door was opened. The small living room was as clean as before. The lamp on the table wasn't lit but still emitted warmth.

Ah Fei let out a long sigh of relief. He had finally returned home safe and sound. He didn't let her down. But where was she? Where could she be?

There weren't any lights on in the kitchen, let alone warm soup waiting for him. The door of Lin XianEr's room was shut tightly.

Ah Fei looked back at Li XunHuan who still stood in the doorway and said, "She must have already went to bed. She always falls asleep really early."

Li XunHuan wanted to let out a smile but the muscles on his face tensed up. He heard faint moans from inside the room,

they were the moans of a woman.

The moans of a dying woman!

The voice was definitely coming from inside Lin XianEr's room.

Li XunHuan's face changed colors, he dashed towards the door and banged on it. "Are you alright? Please open the door!"

There was no answer. The moaning stopped as well. Whoever was inside was obviously trying to respond but couldn't let out a single word.

Ah Fei began sweating profusely and rammed the door open with his shoulder.

Li XunHuan shut his eyes. He didn't want to see the look on Ah Fei's face right now. The look on the face of someone who is witnessing his lover in her dying breath, who would want to see such a thing?

Not only did Li XunHuan not dare to look, nor could he bear to look, he simply didn't even want to entertain the thought of it.

But when the door was opened, he didn't hear anything. Could it be that Ah Fei was so struck by the scene that he fainted?

Li XunHuan opened his eyes and saw Ah Fei still standing in the doorway of Lin XianEr's room.

But the strange thing was the look on Ah Fei's face was not one of sadness but one of bewilderment.

What had just happened in that room? Li XunHuan just couldn't figure it out.

Blood.

The first thing Li XunHuan saw was blood. Then he saw the person lying over the pool of blood.

But he never would have guessed that the person lying there in a pool of blood, breathing her last breath, was LingLing.

Li XunHuan's blood froze. Ah Fei calmly looked over the body that lay on the floor. A strange expression came over his face. Did he just figure something out?

He didn't ask "What is this young girl doing here?"

Instead, he coldly asked, "This time, was she waiting for you here again?"

Li XunHuan felt as if his heart was split open.

He rushed over picking up the bloodsoaked LingLing in his arms, and tested her for a pulse and breath.

He only hoped that it wasn't too late to save her life. He was desperate.

LingLing finally opened her eyes and saw Li XunHuan. Tears fell from her eyes.

These were tears of sorrow, yet they were also tears of joy.

Before her death, she was able to see Li XunHuan one last

time.

Li XunHuan's eyes were overflowing with tears now, and said in a soft comforting voice, "You are so young, there's no way you will die."

LingLing appeared as if she didn't hear his words at all, and said in a trembling voice,

"This time you were wrong."

"This time I was wrong" Li XunHuan said half-sobbingly.

"You should have known, there isn't a man alive who would be willing to kill her." LingLing said.

Li XunHuan's voice had almost become silent, "I've dragged you down into this, I have wronged you."

LingLing struggled to take a hold of his hand. "You have always been good to me. You're not the one who has wronged me. It is him."

"Him?"

"He tricked me, and I ... I've tricked you too."

"You didn't ..."

Her fingernails started to dig into his skin. "I've deceived you ... I had long lost my virginity to him. When I was here waiting for you ... I just hated myself for not telling you from the beginning."

Her voice suddenly became much clearer, as if she was full of energy again. But Li XunHuan knew it was just an illusion.

If it weren't for her youthfulness, there was no way she could have lived until now.

"I tried my best to stay alive until moment, because I wanted to explain this to you, because if you can understand, then I can die with no regrets."

"It was my fault to begin with, it was my fault for not protecting you ..."

"Even though he deceived me, I don't hate him. Because I know he will definitely receive retribution, he will receive a punishment that is ten times worse than mine."

"It was him..."

Before Li XunHuan could finish his sentence, Ah Fei forcefully pushed him aside.

He stared at LingLing and asked, "You lead Lu FengXian to this place?"

LingLing bit down on her lip.

"It was him that asked you to bring Lu FengXian here?"

LingLing suddenly exhausted her remaining strength and shouted out all in one breath, "Yes, it was him, but do you know for what reason he is doing this? Do you know how much he has done for you? For you ..."

Her voice abruptly cracked and she stopped breathing.

Extremely serene, she died an extremely serene death.

There was no further movement from her body, and there

was no further sound from her mouth.

Except for the wind that still blew, everything including the ground itself seemed to lose all of its vitality. Everything had seemingly transformed into a graveyard. A graveyard in which all life could be buried in.

But even the sound of the wind seemed to weep in sorrow. Its cry could shatter one's heart.

After who knows how long, Ah Fei finally stood straight up. But he didn't cast one glance at Li XunHuan. He just coldly asked, "Why did you do this for?"

Normally Li XunHuan would've answered this question without hesitation. But at this moment he didn't say a single word.

He knew that by saying anything he would not only cause himself pain, but it would be hard for others to endure as well.

Ah Fei still didn't turn to face him, and slowly continued, "You thought she was the one who was causing me to fall into depression. That if she were to leave me, that I would regain my livelihood. But did you know that without her, there's no way I could live on?"

Li XunHuan sullenly replied, "I only hoped that you would stop being deceived, that you could find someone who was worthy of your love and affection, and that, you could totally forget all this unhappiness in your life."

Ah Fei seemed shocked and replied, "You think that she has been deceiving me? And that she isn't worth my affection?"

"I only know this, that ever since you met her, she has brought nothing but misfortune."

"And how do you know whether I am happy, or that I'm unhappy?"

Ah Fei finally turned and stared at Li XunHuan and said angrily, "Who do you think you are? Trying to control my every thought and trying to control my destiny? You're nothing. You're just a fool who's lying to himself. You let the woman you love walk straight into hands of danger, and then you think of yourself as all high and noble."

Every word he spoke was as sharp as a needle. No other words in the world could hurt Li XunHuan more.

Ah Fei gritted his teeth and continued, "And even if all she brought to me was misfortune, what about you? What do you bring to those around you? Lin ShiYin's happiness was totally ruined by you. And you're still not satisfied, you still have to come and ruin mine?"

Li XunHuan's hands began to tremble, and before he could even bend down, he was already coughing up blood.

Ah Fei took a few long glances at him before turning around and began walking towards the door. Before Li XunHuan had even stopped coughing, he lunged towards the door and blocked the exit.

"What do you still want?" Ah Fei said.

Li XunHuan wiped the blood off his mouth with his sleeve and caught his breath.

"You ... you're going to look for her?"

"Yes!"

"You can't go!"

"Says who?"

"I said so. Because even if you can find her and bring her back, it'll only be more painful. Sooner or later, the day will come when she will destroy you ... I can't bare to watch you suffer under the hands of this kind of woman."

Ah Fei was already holding on very tightly, but with each word that Li XunHuan spoke, his grip tightened even more. His fingers started to turn white from all the pressure.

His face started turning pale as well. The colors of his eyes had turned a bright fiery red.

"You're being apart from her now will only cause you temporary pain. But if you stay together with her, that pain will last a lifetime. When you two separated, you should've seen clearly just what happenend ..."

Ah Fei interrupted him, "You've always been my friend."

"Yes."

"Up until now, you are still my friend."

"Yes."

"But from now on, we are friends no longer!"

A total look of shock came upon Li XunHuan's face. "Why?"

"Because I can endure you insulting me, but I cannot forgive you for insulting her!"

"You think I'm merely insulting her?"

"I've put up with so much until now, because we've always been friends. But from this day forward, if you dare insult her one more time, that insult will have to be washed away with blood!" Ah Fei's body was shaking now as he spoke, "Whether it be mine or yours!"

Li XunHuan appeared as if someone had punched him hard in the chest. He took two steps back towards the side of the door.

He clenched his mouth closed but blood still dripped down from the sides of his cheek.

"I'm going to go look for her now, and no matter what I will find her. I hope you are not planning to follow me. Because if you are, you will live to regret it!" Ah Fei said, while not even looking at Li XunHuan.

After those words, he walked out of the house.

Tears usually taste salty. But some tears tend to flow inwards back into our stomach.

These tears not only taste salty, but incredibly bitter.

Blood usually tastes salty as well. But the blood of a broken hearted person, that blood will taste even more bitter than tears.

Li XunHuan had no idea how long he had been coughing up blood now, but his sleeves were already dyed red. He had no

way of standing up straight either.

The footprints on the floor were all stained with blood. Li XunHuan suddenly remembered the set of disordered footprints that he saw earlier outside and his heart turned freezing cold.

Ah Fei would definitely find her. Because Lin XianEr will secretly leave traces along her path, so that he could find her.

It didn't even have to be anything substantial, because Ah Fei was naturally gifted at tracking people down.

His skills at tracking were probably even superior to trained dogs.

But what happens when he does catch up?

Its almost certain that Ah Fei will challenge Lu FengXian to fight to the death.

Lin XianEr loved watching men fight to the death for her.

Just thinking about the scenario made Li XunHuan break out in cold sweat.

At the present, Ah Fei is no match for Lu FengXian. The only person who could save him now is Li XunHuan, however ...

"I hope you are not planning to follow me. Because if you are, you will live to regret it!"

And Li XunHuan knew that Ah Fei always meant every word he says!

Furthermore, it was extremely dark outside now.

Li XunHuan's ability at tracking people were nowhere near Ah Fei's level. Even if he wanted to chase after them, his chance of success was close to zero.

Li XunHuan struggled to stand. He picked up LingLing's body, placed her on the bed, and covered her with a blanket.

No matter the consequences, he would go after them. Li XunHuan had made up his mind.

Even if Ah Fei no longer considers him to be a friend, Li XunHuan will always will always consider Ah Fei to be his friend.

His friendship towards Ah Fei will never change.

Its the same with his love. Even if the seas dry up and the mountains split, his heart would never change.

"ShiYin, ShiYin, how have you been?"

Chapter 64: The Source of Troubles

Just the thought of Lin ShiYin brought a sharp pain to Li XunHuan's heart.

But he didn't feel the need to go look for her. Because he knew that Long Xiao4Yun would definitely treat her well. Even though Long Xiao4Yun had changed, he knew that the way Long felt for Lin ShiYin remained the same.

As long as he remained faithful to Lin ShiYin, Li XunHuan could forgive everything.

At this moment, one really couldn't describe the joy in Long Xiao4Yun's mood.

In a few days, he would have to take the position of Second-In-Command in the Gold Currency Union, becoming the sworn brother of the most influential and powerful person in the world.

One could even see from his son's facial expression that his mood had gotten much better.

But the only one who caused him to have regrets was his wife.

"Why didn't she come along with me? Why didn't she come to share in my glory and success?"

But he refused to let this drag down his mood.

For some people, their greatest desire in life is wealth. For others, it is power.

If one can obtain these two, pain and suffering in the matters of their personal lives will be lessened.

Long Xiao3Yun was staring out the window, but his mind focused on nothing in particular.

Long Xiao4Yun tapped his son on the shoulder and asked, "Do you think that ShangGuan JinHong will come in person this time to greet us?"

Long Xiao3Yun turned around and replied, "Of course he will, and the ceremony will certainly be grand."

Long Xiao4Yun nodded in agreement and said, "I thought the same thing, I'm already his sworn brother. By him giving me face, he is giving himself face."

His voice dipped as he asked, "When he does arrive, do you think I should address him as Chief, or as Big Brother?"

Long Xiao3Yun replied, "Of course address him as Big Brother. I'll have to change my habits too and remember to start calling him Uncle."

Long Xiao4Yun let out a hearty laugh and said, "To have an Uncle such as him, you are really fortunate. But ..."

His laughter stopped as he continued, "Li XunHuan is still alive. Do you think ShangGuan JinHong will go back on his word?"

Long Xiao3Yun answered with a smile, "All the heroes of the world know about this event. The letters of invitation have already been sent out. If he does go back on his word, he will lose all credibility and no one will believe anything he says ever again."

A smile came back to Long Xiao4Yun's face. "You are correct. His reputation in the martial arts world is based on his word. His word cannot be retracted once it leaves his mouth. Even if ShangGuan JinHong wanted to change his mind, its too late now."

The papers on his desk were numerous, in fact they seemed to pile up more and more each day.

The scope of his responsibilities seemed to get broader and broader each day as well.

The reason for this is because every single matter required his personal attention and judgment.

He didn't trust anyone.

ShangGuan JinHong was at his desk late into the morning, working without rest for quite some time. Not only was he not tired at all, but he was rather enjoying himself.

The door opened.

A person walked in.

ShangGuan JinHong didn't even bother to turn his head to see who it was. Because he knew there was only one person

who could walk right into his room.

Jing WuMing.

Jing WuMing did as he had always done, upon entering the room he walked right up behind ShangGuan JinHong.

"Where is Li XunHuan?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"He has left." Jing WuMing answered.

ShangGuan JinHong finally turned his head to face Jing WuMing.

After just that one glance, his gaze fell towards Jing WuMing's broken arm. Then he went back to his business. He didn't say another word and didn't exude a single sense of emotion.

There wasn't a trace of emotion on Jing WuMing's face either. His morbidly pale eyes were gazing into the distance.

It was as if nothing had changed at all.

He wasn't questioned, nor was he comforted.

Whether his arms were broken or his legs were broken, it was of no concern to ShanGuan JinHong.

After some time, there was a knock at the door.

Another large pile of documents were brought in.

All of them were yellow but there was a red one which stood out.

ShangGuan JinHong opened this letter first and glanced over it quickly. It only contained these words: "Meet at the old place, Lu FengXian will be there waiting."

ShangGuan JinHong quietly stood up and seemed deep in thought. Then he promptly made a decision.

He slowly walked out.

Jing WuMing followed him closely like his shadow.

The two walked out the door, through a secret passage, past an open courtyard, past a guard who bowed respectfully, and out into the bright sunlight.

The late autumn sun is like a woman in the later years of her life. She no longer has the power to move men's hearts.

The two were still walking one in front of the other ... but suddenly, Jing WuMing noticed that the rhythm in ShangGuan JinHong's steps had slightly changed.

Jing WuMing could no longer coordinate in unison with him.

Although ShangGuan JinHong hadn't increased his pace, the distance between them was slowly getting larger and larger.

Jing WuMing's steps became slower and slower and he eventually stopped altogether.

ShangGuan JinHong didn't turn around. He merely saw JinWuMing's shadow gradually move further away.

Those deathly grey eyes of his slowly revealed an indescribably and profoundly deep sorrow ...

A dense pine forest.

So thick that light barely shines through all year long.

Although it was dark, the air wasn't humid. The winds carried the fresh smell of the evergreens.

Lin XianEr was resting along the side of a tree, holding tightly onto Lu FengXian's hand. Her captivating and seductive eyes never left his face.

Lu FengXian's face was pale, and wrinkles began to appear at the corners of his eyes.

The autumn wind entered the forest and brought a gentle comforting aura with it.

Lin XianEr asked in her gentle voice, "Do you have any regrets?"

Lu FengXian shooked his head and replied, "Regrets? Why would I have any regrets? With you, no man in the world would ever feel any regets."

She swooned into his arms and softly asked, "Am I really that special?"

Lu FengXian embraced her by the waist and said with a smile, "Of course you are, you're better than I have ever dreamed of, better than anyone could ever imagine ..."

His hands slowly made their way up and down her body.

Lin XianEr started breathing heavily and let out a tender cry,

"Not now ..."

"Why?" Lu FengXian asked impatiently.

Lin XianEr bit the side of her lips and said, "You have to save your strength to deal with ShangGuan JinHong."

She twisted her body as if trying to avoid him but it seemed as if she was inviting him at the same time.

Lu FengXian paused for a moment before he started caressing her again and said mischievously, "I can deal with you first and then deal with him later."

"You musn't underestimate him. He isn't as easy to take care of as you think." she said.

"You don't think I'm a match for him?" Lu FengXian asked.

"No thats not what I mean, its just that ... " Lin XianEr replied.

She started to nibble lightly on Lu FengXian's ear and gently whispered, "Once you kill ShangGuan JinHong, the entire world will be ours. We'll have plenty of time to be together in the future, why rush anything now?"

Her sweet words in the autumn wind sound like a beautiful song.

Lu FengXian's heart softened and he held on to her even tighter and said, "You really care this much about me ..."

His voice suddenly stopped.

Lin XianEr quickly pushed herself out of his embrace as well.

A unique set of footsteps emanated throughout the dense forest. In actuality, there is nothing particularly special about this set of footsteps. But for some reason each step sounded like one's own heart was being trampled on.

The sound of the footsteps stopped.

ShangGuan JinHong stood under the shade of a pine tree in front of them. He stood there silently, not saying a single word, not moving a single muscle. He looked like a mountain of ice. An unscalable mountain of ice.

Lu FengXian's breathing suddenly paused as these words came out of his mouth, "ShangGuan JinHong?"

"Lu FengXian?" ShangGuan JinHong asked from behind a large bamboo hat that covered his eyes. Not only did he not answer him, he replied with his own question instead.

"Yes" Lu FengXian finally answered.

But right after he answered, Lu FengXian regretted that he had answered at all. Because he felt that he had lost the initiative and instead the initiative was now in ShangGuan JinHong's hands.

ShangGuan JinHong let out a cold smile and said, "Very good, Lu FengXian is definitely worth me dealing with personally."

Lu FengXian laughed coldly, "If you weren't ShangGuan JinHong, you wouldn't be worth killing either."

After he finished his sentence, he regretted it again.

Although his words were filled with killer intent, it seemed as if he was merely imitating ShangGuan JinHong.

ShangGuan JinHong stood silently for some time, and suddenly shot a glance over at Lin XianEr under his bamboo hat.

Lin XianEr was still standing by the tree, her eyes had slowly changed from soft and gentle to intensely hot.

She knew blood would be spilled very soon.

She adored seeing men spilling their blood for her!

"Come over here." ShangGuan JinHong said to her.

Lin XianEr feigned a look of distress. She looked over at Lu FengXian, then glanced at ShangGuan JinHong.

Lu FengXian laughed and said, "She won't come to you."

She again exchanged glances between ShangGuan JinHong and Lu FengXian.

Lin XianEr knew that she had to choose one of them now.

She knew that whoever she chose had better be the victor.

But who would be victorious?

ShangGuan JinHong still stood there stoically, his eyes beaming with confidence.

Lu FengXian's breathing had become irregular, and he started to look worried.

Lin XianEr suddenly started laughing at him.

Lu FengXian silently cursed under his breath as Lin XianEr fluttered towards ShangGuan JinHong like a swallow.

She had made her choice. She knew that her choice would not be wrong!

Lu FengXian's pupils began to shrink, and his heart began to shrink as well.

This was the first time in his life that he tasted insult, and it was the first time that he tasted defeat. These two pains compounded together were twice as hard to endure!

He also took another double hit. Both his self-respect and his self-confidence had been completely shattered.

His hands started to tremble.

ShangGuan JinHong looked at him coldly and said, "You've already lost!"

Lu FengXian's hands began trembling violently.

"I won't kill you, because you are not worth me killing anymore!" ShangGuan JinHong said.

ShangGuan JinHong turned around and started to walk away.

Lin XianEr followed behind him. After a few steps, she turned to Lu FengXian and said with a giggle, "I think you'd be better off dead."

Lu FengXian had lost this battle before even making a single

move.

In his mind, he knew that he had already lost.

He had not bled a single drop of blood, but his soul and his livelihood had been crushed. His courage and his confidence had been destroyed.

Seeing ShangGuan JinHong walking out of the forest, he no longer had any courage to pursue him.

Even though ShangGuan JinHong hadn't attacked, he had already taken Lu FengXian's life.

"I think you'd be better off dead."

There really was no point in living anymore.

Lu FengXian suddenly fell to the ground and started weeping bitterly.

Lin XianEr ran off to ShangGuan JinHong's side and held him by the hand.

"I only have eyes for you now!" she said sweetly.

"Me?" ShangGuan JinHong replied.

"Although Jing WuMing kills with the swiftest of swords, you're even faster than him. Because ... because you can kill without even raising a finger!" she said.

"That is because I have yet to meet a single person who is worthy of me lifting a finger." he replied.

"The number of people in this world who are a match for you

is certainly small ... I think there is only one," she said as her eyes gleamed with excitement.

"Li XunHuan?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

Lin XianEr let out a sigh and said, "This person is someone who can disappear at anytime, but is also someone who tends to never go away. Sometimes I just don't know what kind of person he is. Is he a gentleman? An idiot? Or a hero?"

"It seems like you've always been quite interested in him." ShangGuan JinHong replied coldly.

Lin XianEr laughed and said, "Of course I have to show interest in him. Because I do not want to die under his hands."

"Hmm?"

"Even towards a lover, over time a person's interest will slowly wane. But when it comes to an enemy, that is not the case." Lin XianEr responded.

She stared up at ShangGuan JinHong and said, "I'm sure you understand this idea better than anyone."

"There are many kinds of interest. Do you hate him? Are you scared of him? Or do you love him?" ShangGuan JinHong replied.

Lin XianEr laughed and said, "You're slowly becoming jealous aren't you?"

ShangGuan JinHong lowered his head and said, "What about Ah Fei?"

"Of course he is jealous too." she replied.

"I only want to know, why didn't you kill him?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"I want to know too, why didn't Jing WuMing kill him?" she asked back.

"I originally intended for you to kill him, you couldn't bear to do it?" ShangGuan JinHong replied.

"Killing someone is easy. Making someone listen to your every word is much harder. Up until now, I've never seen someone as obedient as he is." Lin XianEr said.

She threw herself into ShangGuan JinHong's chest and said, "I didn't come to look for you to argue. If you really want me to kill him, there are still plenty of opportunities to do so in the future. I'll do as you please."

No one could be upset with her.

She is like an extremely expensive cat. If she accidentally scratches you with her claws, even before you can feel the pain she is already lapping at you affectionately with her tongue.

ShangGuan JinHong stared intently at her face.

Under the setting sun, her face looked so delicate that even a gentle touch could ruin it. The gentle autumn wind cannot even compare with a single breath that left her mouth.

ShangGuan JinHong slowly lowered his head.

He pressed his lips against her. Lin XianEr suddenly lifted her head from his chest and fell to ground.

ShangGuan JinHong's eyes rolled backwards. But his posture didn't change. Even the tips of his fingers stayed perfectly still.

He didn't cast a single glance at Lin XianEr but instead was staring at a patch of withered yellow grass.

There was nothing on that patch of grass. But after some time, the image of a person gradually appeared.

Someone had come!

This person's shadow was dragged out by the evening sun.

His footsteps did not make a sound. This person's footsteps were as light as a fox.

ShangGuan JinHong still didn't turn his head. Lin XianEr who was still on the floor had started moaning.

The person's shadow was much closer now. It stopped right behind ShangGuan JinHong.

A voice started speaking, "I never kill a person from behind. But this time, I will have to make an exception!"

This person's voice was normally cold and resolute, but because of anger and anxiety, it was shaky.

This tone of voice was definitely what someone sounds like before they kill.

But ShangGuan JinHong didn't move. He didn't even say a

word.

The shadow on the ground raised its hand.

There was a sword in that hand, but it hadn't yet stabbed out. The voice again asked, "You're still not going to turn around?"

ShangGuan JinHong responded casually, "I can still kill someone standing behind me. Why should I bother to turn around?"

After he finished, the moaning stopped too.

Lin XianEr's eyes dropped wide open, and let out a cry, "Ah Fei!"

She got up from ShangGun JinHong's side and walked over. Her shadow intermingled with the shadow on the ground.

ShangGuan JinHong gazed at the two shadows on the ground. Then, he started walking ahead slowly ... and stopped as he stepped over the two shadows on the ground.

The sword in Ah Fei's hand had dropped to the floor.

Lin XianEr held his hand was whispering repeatedly, "You really came, I knew you would come ..."

She repeated that same line over and over, each time softer, gentler, and sweeter than the last.

Her tender voice could melt mountains of ice.

Ah Fei's heart was already starting to melt. His sense of urgency, resentment, and hatred had subsided.

"I knew that when you didn't see me, you'd be very worried and would come looking for me." she said.

Seeing the the color of Ah Fei's face turn palish green, her eyes suddenly turned red and she said weepingly, "In trying to find me, you must have suffered alot."

"As long as I've found you, I'm already content." Ah Fei said.

No matter what the consequence, he would risk it to find her.

No matter what he had to suffer, he would endure it to find her.

"As long as I've found you, I'm already content."

Nine words. In just these nine words were an immeasurable amount of emotion. One probably can't express such emotion even with nine hundred thousand words.

Suddenly, the sword flashed!

The sword that was on the floor shot up, the flash of light was quick like the strike of a snake, and the sword entered into the person's hand.

All of a sudden ShangGuan JinHong was standing in front of them.

His emotionless gaze was focused at the tip of the sword. This sword was but an ordinary steel sword. A sword that Ah Fei had "borrowed" from a traveler along the way.

But ShangGun JinHong seemed interested in this sword.

With Lin XianEr at his side, there was nothing that could draw away Ah Fei's attention.

But now, he finally realized that there was another person here. A person that he had intended to kill.

Now, his sword was already in that person's hands.

That ordinary sword had suddenly transformed into a sword that emitted an aura, a killing aura!

"Who are you?" Ah Fei asked sharply.

ShangGuan JinHong didn't answer. He didn't even look at him either. His cold emotionless gaze was still focused at the tip of the sword. A wry smile broke from the corner of his mouth. A smile full of disdain.

"You were planning to kill with this sword?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"What about that sword?" Ah Fei replied.

"This sword cannot kill me." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Any kind of sword can kill!" Ah Fei responded.

ShangGuan JinHong laughed and replied, "But this is not your sword. If you are adamant about using this sword, the only person you will kill is yourself."

The sword flashed again, and the blade spun around.

ShangGuan JinHong held the tip of the sword between his fingers, and presented the handle to Ah Fei.

"If you don't believe me, go ahead and try." ShangGun JinHong said with a grin.

Before Ah Fei could even extend his arm out, his muscles had already tensed up.

He discovered that in the presence of this person, he felt a certain sensation. It was a sensation that no one else had ever evoked from him before. It was a sensation that caused him such anxiety that his stomach started to contract, that made him want to throw up.

But how could he not grab that sword over?

He finally reached out. But before his hand could touch the handle, the sword was snatched away by another person's hand. A soft, slender hand.

Lin XianEr had a tear in her eyes as she looked at Ah Fei and said, "You intend to kill him? Do you know who he is?"

Lin XianEr continued, "He is my savior."

Chapter 65: Manipulation

"Savior?" Ah Fei asked.

"Lu FengXian had been ... forcing me, torturing me. I wanted to die but I couldn't. If it weren't for him, I don't know what would've ..." Lin XianEr replied, as tears began streaming down her cheeks.

Ah Fei was startled.

Lin XianEr continued while sobbing, "I was hoping that you would repay his kindness for me, but now, now you're ..."

"To kill someone, that can also be a method of repayment." ShangGuan JinHong suddenly interrupted.

Lin XianEr turned around and said, "You ... you want him to kill for you?"

"Since he owes me a life, why not let him repay that debt with another life?" ShangGuan JinHong replied.

"But I'm the one you saved, not him." Lin XianEr said.

"Your debt is his debt, am I correct?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

Lin XianEr turned to face Ah Fei.

He gritted his teeth and replied, "I will repay her debt!"

"Do you owe debts to anyone?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"Never!" Ah Fei responded.

ShangGuan JinHong slightly grinned and said, "Whose life are you going to repay me with?"

"Except for one person, anyone you want." Ah Fei replied.

"Except for whom?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Li XunHuan!" Ah Fei said.

ShangGuan JinHong snickered and said, "You're afraid of him?"

Ah Fei's eyes filled with sadness as he replied, "I won't kill him, because I owe him even more."

ShangGuan JinHong started laughing and said, "Very well. If you weren't bound to your debt to him, you wouldn't honor your debt to me either."

"Who do you want me to kill?" Ah Fei asked.

ShangGuan JinHong slowly turned around and said, "Follow me."

The night drew near. Ah Fei wasn't holding on to Lin XianEr's hand because he felt a strange uneasiness inside his heart. He just couldn't make out what it was.

ShangGuan JinHong who was in front of him never turned around.

Yet somehow, Ah Fei felt as if he was under his careful gaze the entire time. And under this gaze, he felt an indescribable pressure bearing down on him.

The further they walked, the heavier that pressure felt.

Stars were beginning to dot the night sky. The open field was a vast emptiness. The winds had fallen silent.

Not a single sound could be heard. Even the insects that normally buzzed with activity in the autumn night were quiet.

It was as if the only sound in the whole world were that of their footsteps.

Ah Fei suddenly realized that his normally silent footsteps were making noise. In addition, they were in unison with the sound of ShangGuan JinHong's steps. One after the other, their steps melded into a peculiar rhythm.

A cricket that had leapt out from a dried thich patch of grass was seemingly frightened by the rhythm of their marching and leapt right back. Even the sound of their footsteps carried a killing aura.

What could be the cause of this?

Ah Fei never made a sound when he walked. But all of a sudden, why did his legs feel so heavy?

And what could be the cause of this?

Ah Fei looked downward and found out exactly why. Every single step he took was perfectly in between ShangGuan

JinHong's every other step.

When he would take a step, and ShangGuan JinHong would take a second step. When he took a third step, ShangGuan JinHong would take a fourth step. Each and every step was precise and without err.

If he sped up his steps, ShangGuan JinHong would speed up as well. If he slowed down, ShangGuan JinHong would slow down as well.

From the beginning, it was ShangGuan JinHong who was coordinating with his every step.

But now, he suddenly realized that when ShangGuan JinHong increased his pace, his feet would involuntarily move faster. When ShangGuan JinHong decreased his pace, his own steps would slow down as well.

It was as if ShangGuan JinHong were controlling his feet, and he had no way of shaking free!

Ah Fei began to break out in cold sweat.

But for some reason, he felt that walking in this manner was quite soothing. He felt every ounce of muscle in his body being relaxed.

It was as if his mind and body were being hypnotized by this rhythm.

This rhythm was able to rattle a person's soul.

Lin XianEr was slowly becoming aware of this. Her beautiful eyes suddenly became alert and vigilant, emitting an apprehensive viciousness.

Ah Fei was hers.

Only she could control Ah Fei.

She would definitely not allow someone to snatch him right out of her grasp!

Jing WuMing was standing there. He was still standing exactly where his footsteps had stopped earlier.

The sun started to set. The night drew near. Stars began dotting the night sky ...

His body hadn't moved. His glance hadn't shifted either. But the shadow that ShangGuan JinHong had cast on the ground had forever vanished.

But now, ShangGuan JinHong's image suddenly reappeared.

Jing WuMing first saw the top of his bamboo hat, then his yellow robe, then his sword which shimmered under the reflection of the moonlight.

Then, Jing WuMing saw Ah Fei.

If anyone saw them from afar, they would immediately think the person with ShangGuan JinHong is Jing WuMing, because the rhythm in their steps was so unusual and unique.

Who would have thought that Ah Fei had taken Jing WuMing's place?

Jing WuMing's eyes appeared darker than ash. So dark that the moon and the stars themselves were blacked out. A darkness that absorbed the coming dawn into nothingness, lifelessness; such that even "death" had no meaning.

Absolute nothingness.

The expression on his face was even more empty than his eyes.

ShangGuan JinHong slowly walked over and stopped in front of him.

Ah Fei's footsteps stopped as well.

ShangGuan JinHong's eyes were focused into the distance. He didn't cast a single glance at Jing WuMing. He suddenly reached towards Jing WuMing's waist and pulled his sword out.

"You can no longer wield this sword." ShangGuan JinHong said coldly.

"Yes." Jing WuMing replied.

His voice was frightfully empty as well. Even he himself couldn't be certain that the words he heard came from his own mouth.

ShangGuan JinHong was still holding that blue steel sword between his fingers. He presented the handle to Jing WuMing and said, "This sword is for you."

Jing WuMing slowly reached over and took the sword.

"It makes no difference what kind of sword you use now."

ShangGuan JinHong said slowly.

Even after walking over to him, he had yet to cast a single glance at Jing WuMing.

Ah Fei had followed over as well, and he didn't cast a single glance at Jing WuMing either.

Lin XianEr smiled playfully at him and said, "Is it even that difficult to die?"

A patch of clouds covered the stars in the sky.

Suddenly, the sound of thunder cracked the silence, and rain began to pour.

Jing WuMing still didn't move and he stood in the rain.

His whole body was soaked now. Beads of water gathered at the corners of his eyes. Was it rain? Or are they tears?

But how could Jing WuMing shed tears?

Those who never shed tears, normally only shed blood!

The sword. Paper thin and razor sharp.

The lamp light is extremely steady. Flashes of light from a sword. Blue flashes.

The window is tightly shut. The rain outside is intense. The air inside the house is calm.

Under the steady lamp light, Ah Fei was able to concentrate

on the sword. His eyes hadn't moved for quite some time.

ShangGuan JinHong looked at him intently and asked, "What do you think about this sword?"

"Good, Very good." Ah Fei replied.

"Compared to the sword you used to wield?" ShangGUan JinHong asked.

"It feels lighter." Ah Fei said.

Suddenly, ShangGuan JinHong grabbed the sword with two fingers and bent the tip back onto the blade to form a circle. The blade emanated a deep *WUNG* sound.

The sound it made was like a dragon's roar.

Ah Fei's cold eyes suddenly warmed up.

ShangGuan JinHong asked again with a smile, "And in this regard how does it compare to the one you used to wield?"

"My old sword would have snapped if it was bent like that." Ah Fei responded.

Once ShangGUan JinHong let go with his fingers, the sword shot out.

A tea cup that was on the table was split in half as if it was decayed wood.

Ah Fei couldn't hold in his excitement and shouted out, "Excellent sword!"

"It certainly is a fine sword. Extremely light but not dull.

Extremely thin but not brittle. The blade is resilient yet flexible. Although its appearance is crude and simple, it is actually the masterpiece of the number one swordsmith in the world, Master Gu. In addition, it was specially made to accomodate Jing WuMing's style." ShangGuan JinHong explained.

"This sword's conception is really similar to Jing WuMing's, isn't it?" ShangGuan JinHong added with a laugh.

"It is quite similiar." Ah Fei responded.

"Although his attacks are much more lethal and vicious, your attacks are much more precise and accurate. Because you are more patient than he is, perhaps this sword is better suited for you." ShangGuan JinHong said.

After a long pause, Ah Fei replied, "This is not my sword."

"Swords have no owners. Whoever is able, wiolds them." ShangGun JinHong said.

He brought the sword over and with a sinister gleam in his eye and said, "And now, this sword has become yours."

After another long pause, the same words came out of Ah Fei's mouth.

"This is not my sword."

"With this sword, any sword can be yours. Because with this sword, you could kill anyone." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Then he added with a smile, "You could even kill me."

This time, Ah Fei kept silent for a while.

"You are indebted to me. You have to kill for me. So I present you with a killing weapon. It is only fair." ShangGuan JinHong continued.

Ah Fei reached out and took the sword.

"Good! Very good! With this sword, your debt will be cleared by tomorrow!" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Who do you want me to kill?" Ah Fei asked.

"Don't worry, I won't ask you to kill a friend ... " ShangGuan JinHong slowly replied.

Before his sentence was finished, ShangGuan JinHong walked out and shut the door behind him.

They could hear him speaking from the outside, "The two people in this room are my guests. Before tomorrow morning, make sure no one disturbs them."

Only Ah Fei and Lin XianEr were left in that room now.

Lin XianEr who was sitting down had not yet looked up.

ShangGuan JinHong who was in the room for quite some time had not glanced at her once.

The entire time she hadn't spoken either. Except for when Ah Fei was reaching out to take the sword, her mouth slightly moved as if she was wanted to say something, but quickly held it back in.

Now that only the two of them were in the room, she finally spoke, "You're really going to kill for him?"

"I owe him, and I've already given him my word." Ah Fei said with a sigh.

"Do you have any idea who he wants you to kill?" Lin XianEr asked.

"He didn't say." Ah Fei replied.

"You haven't guessed yet?" she asked.

"You've already figured out who it is?" he answered.

"If I'm not mistaken, the person who he wants you to kill is Long Xiao4Yun." she said slowly.

"Long Xiao4Yun? Why?" Ah Fei asked.

"Because Long Xiao4Yun plans on using him. But he only uses others." Lin XianEr said smiling.

"Long Xiao4Yun should have been killed a long time ago." Ah Fei said.

"But you mustn't make a move." she advised him.

"Why?" he asked.

She didn't answer but instead questioned, "Do you know why ShangGuan JinHong wants you to kill Long Xiao4Yun in his stead?"

"It is easier to have someone kill for you than it is to do so yourself." Ah Fei said.

"But if ShangGuan JinHong wants Long Xiao4Yun dead, it is

but a mere formality to do so. Plus, the number of experts in the Gold Currency Union are as numerous as the clouds. Let alone one Long Xiao4Yun, even if it was a hundred or a thousand, it would still be easily taken care of by them. If ShangGuan JinHong didn't want to attack himself, all he has to do is to give the order to his minions." Lin XianEr explained.

"You know the real reason?" Ah Fei asked.

"I certainly do ... after two more days is the first of the month." she replied.

"What about the first of the month?" Ah Fei asked.

"Everyone in the Wulin community knows that at the first of the month, Long Xiao4Yun and ShangGuan JinHong are to become sworn brothers." she responded.

Ah Fei looked perplexed and asked, "Has ShangGuan JinHong's vision gone bad?"

"Of course he doesn't want to become sworn brothers with Long Xiao4Yun. But at the same time, he doesn't want to be known as someone who goes back on his word. His only solution is to have Long Xiao4Yun killed." she replied.

She smiled and added, "The dead can't become sworn brothers with those who are still living, right?"

Ah Fei didn't answer.

"But because the two have publicly agreed to become sworn brothers, ShangGuan JinHong can't lay a hand on him. He can't order his people to kill him either. That's why he has to use you." Lin XianEr said.

"To kill Long Xiao4Yun, you are more suitable than anyone else." she added with a grin.

"Why is that?" Ah Fei said.

"Because you are not tied with the Gold Currency Union in any way. And also because Li XunHuan is your friend. Long Xiao4Yun had betrayed Li XunHuan before, almost everyone knows that by now." she replied.

Lin XianEr took a deep breath and continued, "Therefore, if you killed Long Xiao4Yun, everyone will think that it is because you did it for Li XunHuan. No one would suspect that ShangGuan JinHong had any part in it."

"Even if it wasn't for anyone, I still wouldn't let this kind of person live any longer in this world." Ah Fei said coldly.

"However, once you kill Long Xiao4Yun, ShangGuan JinHong will kill you." Lin XianEr said.

Ah Fei fell silent.

"Not only would he kill you to silence you, he would kill you so others would think that he did it to avenge his sworn brother. So that others would praise his loyalty." she said.

Ah Fei's eyes shifted to the sword in his hand.

"ShangGuan JinHong's martial arts are unfathomably deep and profound, you're ... you're not thinking of ..." Lin XianEr said.

Before finishing that sentence, she threw herself into his chest and softly whispered, "Since he is not here, let's take

this chance to escape."

"Escape?" Ah Fei said.

"I understand that you never run from anything, but just this once, can you make an exception for me?" she asked.

"No." Ah Fei replied.

"Not even for me?" Lin XianEr's voice became incredibly tender and tears started flowing from her eyes.

She had unleashed her deadliest weapon.

Ah Fei didn't look at her but appeared to be gazing off into the distance. He slowly answered, "It is because of you, that I can do no such thing."

"Why?" she asked.

"For your sake, I refuse to be a coward who goes back on his word." he replied.

"But ... but ..." she said.

Lin XianEr curled up into his chest and started weeping.

"I care not whether you are a coward or a hero. The person I love is you, and I only want you to be alive and by my side."

Ah Fei's resolute expression suddenly melted away again. He said to her softly, "Aren't I by your side right now?"

Lin XianEr still crying, replied, "Sometimes I just don't understand what you're thinking inside."

"My beliefs are very simple, that's why they will never change." he replied.

The simpler they are, the less they will ever change.

Lin XianEr looked up at him with tears in her eyes and asked, "Your beliefs will always remain the same?"

"Always!"

His replies are very simple as well.

Lin XianEr stood up and slowly made her way to the window. Not a sound could be heard from the outside. Not even the buzzing of insects or the cries of birds could be heard. Any kind of living thing that came to this place would suddenly feel that life was extremely worthless.

The only certainty in this place was the feeling of "death". Whether you were sitting or standing. Whether you were inside or outside. You could always sense its foreboding presence.

After some time, Lin XianEr sighed and said, "I suddenly realized that the relationship between you and Li XunHuan is very much like that of ShangGuan JinHong and Jing WuMing."

"Hmm?" Ah Fei said.

"The only reason Jing WuMing is alive is to do ShangGuan JinHong's bidding. So obviously, ShangGuan JinHong treats him very well, that is until now ..."

There was a bitter smile on her lips as she continued, "Now, Jing WuMing is no longer of any use to him, so ShangGuan

JinHong chased him out like a wild dog. I bet he never even dreamed that things would end like this."

"He should have realized this long ago." Ah Fei said.

"If he knew that this would happen long ago, would he still do the same thing?" Lin XianEr asked.

"He would, because he doesn't have a choice." Ah Fei replied.

"And what about you?" she asked.

Ah Fei fell silent again.

"Li XunHuan is kind to you because you are the only person in this world who can aid him. Besides you, he is completely alone. But when you are no longer of any use to him, will he do as ShangGuan JinHong did to Jing WuMing?" Lin XianEr said.

After another long pause, Ah Fei suddenly said, "Turn your head around."

He said this very slowly, but it was very stern and resolute.

He had never spoken to Lin XianEr like this before.

Lin XianEr whose hand was by the window sill suddenly held on tightly and asked, "Turn my head around? What for?"

"Because I want to make two things clear to you." Ah Fei said.

"I can hear perfectly fine from here." she said.

"Because I want you to look at me. There are some words which you not only have to listen with your ears but also with your eyes. Otherwise, you will never understand their meaning." he said.

She held on to the window sill even tighter before finally turning her head around.

After she saw the look in Ah Fei's eyes, Lin XianEr understood what he meant.

His eyes had suddenly become exactly like ShangGuan JinHong's.

When a person's eyes looked like this, it meant that no matter what that person was saying, you had better listen and not disobey.

Otherwise you would definitely regret it!

At that moment, Lin XianEr realized that she had been wrong.

She had thought that Ah Fei was completely under her control, that he would obey her every wish. Only now did she realize just how wrong she was.

Ah Fei was obviously in love with her. Very much in love.

But in a man's life, there are things which are much more important than "love", even much more important than life itself.

Ah Fei had always listened to everything she said, because she had never brought this up before.

She could ask him to die for her, but she still couldn't ignore the matter at hand.

"What did you want to talk to me about? I'm listening?" Lin XianEr said smilingly.

Even though her smile looked as sweet as ever, it seemed rather forced.

"I want you to understand, that Li XunHuan is my friend. And I won't allow anyone to insult him ... ANYONE!" Ah Fei said.

Lin XianEr lowered her head. "And ... "

"What you said before ... not only have you underestimated me, but you've underestimated Jing WuMing as well." Ah Fei said.

"Him?" Lin XianEr asked with a surprised look.

"He left because he wanted to leave. Not because someone chased him away." Ah Fei replied.

"Except, I don't understand ..." she said.

"You don't need to understand. You just need to remember that." Ah Fei said.

"I'll remember your every word. I just hope that you don't forget, that you once said ... that the way you feel about me will never change." Lin XianEr said quietly as she lowered her head.

Ah Fei stared into her eyes. He kept staring and staring.

Even if his heart really was like a mountain of ice, that mountain was rapidly melting.

Ah Fei started walking slowly towards Lin XianEr. Her body seemed to emit some kind of force that pulled him closer and closer. Ah Fei felt like he couldn't control himself.

Lin XianEr dodged to avoid his grasp and pretended to be apprehensive, and said, "Not today ..."

Suddenly Ah Fei's body became stiff.

Lin XianEr giggled and said, "Today you have to get a lot of rest, hurry to bed. I will look over you by your side."

ShangGuan JinHong is standing still. His eyes are focused on the door. He is waiting.

What is he waiting for?

The guards outside the door had already withdrew because ShangGuan JinHong had given the order, "Someone is going to come today, I don't want anyone to disturb them."

Who is he expecting to come?

Why is ShangGuan JinHong that concerned with this person?

ShangGuan JinHong has a objective in everything he does. What is his objective this time?

Late into night. Even quieter still.

Ah Fei eyes were closed. His breathing was even. He looked like he was deep asleep.

In actuality, he is wide awake. He has never been so awake before in his life.

He rarely had trouble falling asleep. Because if he wasn't completely exhausted, he would never try to sleep. But on those days that he was, once his head touched the pillow, he would immediately fall asleep.

But now, he wasn't sleeping.

Lin XianEr had fallen asleep beside him and was breathing very evenly as well.

Ah Fei only had to turn sideways and he could embrace her warm, soft body.

But Ah Fei tried his best to resist his urges. He didn't even look at her. He was afraid that once he saw her, his willpower would collapse.

Lin XianEr had always trusted him completely, how could he do anything to her?

He could still smell the sweet fragrance of her breath. He had to use all his concentration and focus just to control himself.

It was definitely not a nice plight to have to endure.

Desire is like a wave in the ocean. One second it is quiet and still, another second it comes rolling towards you again with

all its might.

He continued resisting that desire. He started to resemble a fish caught in a frying pan.

How could he fall asleep?

Lin XianEr's breathing seemed to get heavier. Yet her eyes began to slowly open.

Those radiant eyes of hers in the darkness slowly started to focus on Ah Fei.

His disheveled hair was spread all across his forehead. He looked like a sleeping child.

Lin XianEr suddenly noticed that his eyelashes were very long. She wanted to reach out and lightly stroke them.

In that single instant, if she really did reach her hand out, Ah Fei would forever be hers. He would willingly abandon everything just for her.

In that single instant, her glance was soft, gentle, and kind. But that short instant quickly passed. She had retracted her hand. Her soft and gentle gaze had turned ice cold.

She whispered, "Little Fei are you asleep yet?"

Ah Fei didn't respond. He didn't open his eyes either.

He didn't dare to.

He was afraid that he would ...

Lin XianEr waited for some time. Then suddenly she slipped

herself out of the bed and picked up her shoes.

With her shoes in hand, she quietly opened the door and snuck out.

This late at night, where could she be off to?

Ah Fei suddenly felt as if his heart had been pricked by a needle.

"What you don't know won't bother you. It is actually better for us that certain things in life we never find out."

Ah Fei understood this very well. Reality is always brutal, and painful.

However, he could no longer control himself.

The door opened.

A smile flashed across ShangGuan JinHong's face.

He looks even more intimidating when he's smiling than when he's not.

Lin XianEr lifted up the door, and stood on top. Her eyes were pointed at ShangGuan JinHong. *PU*, the shoes in her hand flopped to the floor.

She let out a long sigh and said, "You already knew that I would come, didn't you?"

"Yes." ShangGuan JinHong replied.

Lin XianEr bit her lip and said, "I don't even know why I came for."

"I know why." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"You know why?" Lin XianEr asked.

"You came because you've realized that Ah Fei is not as reliable as you had thought. If you want to live, the only person that you can rely on is me." ShangGuan JinHong replied.

"And I ... I can rely on you?" she said.

"You have to ask yourself that." ShangGuan JinHong said with a laugh.

There are no completely reliable men in this world.

A man is as reliable to the extent of just how well a woman treats him.

Lin XianEr obviously understands this.

She laughed and replied, "You will definitely be reliable then, because I will never disappoint you."

She started laughing with her eyes.

Then, her hands, her waist, her thighs ...

She seemed to have made up her mind. No matter what the method, she would have this man.

In the quickest instant, she used her most effective weapon.

In the eyes of men, there is nothing more captivating than a woman in her bare skin. And this wasn't any woman, it was Lin XianEr.

The strange thing was, ShangGuan JinHong's eyes were still focused on the door.

It seemed that the door panel was much more attractive to him than she was.

Lin XianEr stopped panting for a second and said, "Hold me, I ... I almost can't move anymore."

ShangGuan JinHong picked her up in his arms, but his eyes were still focused on the door.

With a *PENG*, the door suddenly burst open!

A person barged into the room, like a ball of fire.

Blazing fire!

Ah Fei!

No one knew the anger he felt right now, nor could anyone imagine.

A smile flashed across ShangGuan JinHong's face.

Had he already predicted that Ah Fei would come?

Ah Fei didn't even see him.

He didn't see anyone at all, the only thing he saw before him was a nightmare.

His entire body began to tremble.

Lin XianEr didn't even blink. She was still hanging onto ShangGuan JinHong's neck.

"The people who come here, don't they even knock?" she said coldly.

Ah Fei suddenly made a fist, and struck at the door.

An iron door!

Blood started to drip from Ah Fei's fist, pain shot through his body and his lips turned pale.

But what kind of pain in this world could compare to the pain he felt inside his heart?

Lin XianEr laughed and said, "So it turns out this person is crazy."

Ah Fei finally erupted and roared, "So you really are this kind of woman."

Lin XianEr answered casually, "You didn't realize? I've always been this kind of woman. I haven't changed at all. You never realized it before because you're too stupid."

She laughed coldly and continued, "If you were a little smarter, you would've known not to come."

"I'm already here." Ah Fei replied.

"What good is it that you've come? So you can scold me? What relation do I have with you? That you think you can mind my business? That whatever I do, you have to watch

over me." she asked mockingly.

Tears seemed to be forming in Ah Fei's eyes, but those tears suddenly turned to ice.

His eyes have turned deathly pale.

A hopelessly and deathly pale color. The same color as the eyes of Jing WuMing.

At that moment he seemed to have wept his last bloody tear. In that instant life itself had seemed to end.

He was starting to turn into a dead person.

"I shouldn't have come, I really shouldn't have come ..."

If he knew he shouldn't have, then why didn he come for?

People always tend to do the things that hurt themselves when they know that they shouldn't.

Chapter 66: Self Humiliation

Ah Fei didn't know why he ran out of the room.

The cold stare of ShangGuan JinHong on him the entire time, on him as he ran out.

Lin XianEr said softly, "I'm completely devoted to only you, I take it that you believe me now?"

"I believe you." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Before he had even finished speaking those three words, ShangGuan JinHong dropped Lin XianEr onto the bed and leapt out the door.

Lin XianEr felt her whole body stiffen up.

But the look on her face wasn't one of sorrow or worry, it was a look of fear.

It was the same look of fear as when she realized that she hadn't truly conquered Ah Fei. But this fear didn't last very long.

"What have I done? What have I gained?"

"What is there in the world that is truly reliable?"

She stood up and began picking her clothes off the floor. Then she started folding them, very slowly and very neatly.

When her body loosened up, she lied down. An extremely sweet smile came across her face.

She had decided that she was still going to try.

The end of the passage led to a gate.

Ah Fei was running past the doorway when stumbled over and fell.

He just laid there on the floor. He didn't try to get up nor did he try to do anything at all.

At a time like this, his mind suddenly went entirely blank.

It was a strange site to behold ...

Autumn had passed. The parched soil carried the fragrance of fallen leaves.

Ah Fei gnawed at the ground and swallowed a mouthful of dirt.

Rough, thick, parched dirt went through his throat and into his stomach.

He looked like he was trying to satisfy his hunger with soil.

He had become an empty shell of a person; he had no

thoughts, no feelings, no flesh, and no soul. Twenty something years of living suddenly spiraled into a blank void.

ShangGuan JinHong had caught up to him now. He glanced at Ah Fei before stepping over him and into the house nearby to retrieve the sword.

TI, the sword plunged into the ground, right in front of Ah Fei's face.

The cold tip of the sword drew blood as it glazed across Ah Fei's cheek. Warm blood trickled down from blade into the soil.

ShangGuan JinHong's voice sounded even sharper than that blade. "This is your sword!"

Ah Fei did not move.

"If you were to die now, no one would mourn your loss. No one would feel any pity for you either. Within three days, your corpse will be rotting in some ditch like a wild dog." he said.

ShangGuan JinHong snickered as he continued, "Because if a person were to die over a woman like that, then he's even lowlier than a wild dog."

Ah Fei suddenly stood up and reached for the sword.

His eyes were blood red. His mouth was still brimming with dirt and mud. He really did look like a wild beast.

"You want to kill me, right? Why haven't you attacked yet?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

Ah Fei's hands started to tremble. Veins began to bulge out of his arms.

"If you are planning to kill her, I won't stop you." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Ah Fei suddenly turned around and stopped.

"Have you lost the courage to kill as well?" ShangGuan JinHong asked mockingly.

Ah Fei bent over and started to throw up.

ShangGuan JinHong's gaze gradually became less fierce as he spoke, "I know living must feel more difficult than death right now. But if you die now, you're only running away. I know that you are not a coward."

"In addition, you haven't done what you promised to do for me yet." ShangGuan JinHong added.

Ah Fei had finished throwing up, but he was still heaving air.

"If you still have the courage to live on, then follow me!" ShangGuan JinHong said, as he turned around.

Ah Fei looked at what he had threw up before he turned around and followed ShangGuan JinHong.

The entire time he hadn't shed a single tear.

Those who don't shed tears, only shed blood!

And he is already prepared to bleed.

Past the doorway was a small courtyard.

In the courtyard there was a single white willow tree sighing in the autumn breeze. It is sighing about how short life is, and about how foolish people can be, in not being able to realize just how precious life really is.

The lamps are still lit.

Light shined out from under the door and onto ShangGuan JinHong's feet.

ShangGuan JinHong turned around to pat Ah Fei on the shoulder and said, "Lift up your chest. Go inside and cast away your gloomy mood."

Ah Fei proceeded inside.

What was waiting for him inside the house?

Why did ShangGuan JinHong bring him here?

Ah Fei didn't really care.

When a person's heart is already dead, what else is there to fear?

There were seven people inside that house.

Seven incredibly beautiful maidens.

Seven inviting smiles directed at him, seven seductive pairs of eyes staring at him.

Ah Fei was caught by surprise.

ShangGuan JinHong grinned and said, "She isn't the only beautiful girl in the world, is she?"

The group of girls dragged him, giggling and laughing.

Their fragrance carried a faint smell of wine.

Several wooden chests were piled together in one corner of the room.

ShangGuan JinHong opened one of the chests and bright gleaming light radiated out from it.

The chest was filled with precious pearls and jewels.

"With one of these chests, you could buy the hearts of a hundred women." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Our hearts already belong to him, we don't have to be bought." one of the girls said flirtingly.

ShangGuan JinHong laughed and said, "Look, she isn't the only one who can feed sweet words into your ears either. All women are born with a mouth full of honey."

"But we're telling the truth!" another of the girls said giggling.

"Truths are lies, Lies are the truth. Truth and lies, there really is no difference." ShangGuan JinHong said.

He slowly walked up to Ah Fei and asked, "Do you still want to die?"

Ah Fei downed an entire jug of wine, and answered with a big smile, "Die? Who wants to die?"

"Good. As long as you live on, everything here is yours!"
ShangGuan JinHong said.

Ah Fei lifted one of the girls into his arms.

He held on to her extremely tightly, almost as if he was trying to crush her.

ShangGuan JinHong quietly made his way out and closed the door.

The constant sound of laughter could be heard coming from inside the house.

ShangGuan JinHong walked to the middle of the courtyard with his arms crossed. He stared up at the moon and mumbled to himself, "The weather will definitely be good tomorrow."

ShangGun JinHong loves good weather.

When the weather is better, blood flows faster, and people die even faster!

Beautiful weather!

Dust blowing in the wind. A long street.

The sun's rays are fresh and full of energy.

A single rider on horseback speeds out of the Cloudy Inn. He has thick eyebrows, curved eyes, and a valiant expression

on his face. Across his body is draped a loose fitting yellow robe. His wide powerful chest gladly welcomes the dust in the wind and the warm rays of the sun.

There is only one thing on his mind.

"To bring Ah Fei so that he may kill the two people clothed in purple and red!"

This was the direct order of ShangGuan JinHong!

When members of the Gold Currency Union received an order from ShangGuan JinHong, they focus on nothing else.

The color of Long Xiao4Yun's face was almost the same as the color of the clothes on his body, reddish purple.

But he had not been drinking.

Power can intoxicate people much more potently than wine can.

ShangGuan JinHong was personally coming to greet and welcome him. It was definitely going to be a glorious event.

He wished he could invite every single person in the Wulin community to see him today in all his glory and splendor.

It was a pity that the number of people who came were few.

No one liked to draw unnecessary trouble upon themselves.

Three cups of wine went down his throat. Long Xiao4Yun's face is even redder now. He raised his cup and said, "Big Brother, your good intentions toward me are irrepayable. I will never forget your generosity. This cup is for you!"

Cheers!"

"I never touch wine." ShangGuan JinHong said coldly.

Long Xiao3Yun who was standing behind them poured a cup of tea and presented it to ShangGuan JinHong, saying, "If that is so, Uncle please accept this cup of tea instead."

"I don't drink tea either." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Long Xiao4Yun let out a laugh and asked, "So big brother, what do you normally drink then?"

"Water." ShangGuan JinHong replied.

"You only drink water?" Long Xiao4Yun exclaimed with a look of surprise.

"Water is very calming. Those who drink water have clear minds." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Long Xiao3Yun brought over another cup, this one filled with water and presented it to ShangGuan JinHong.

"I only drink when I'm thirsty. Right now, I am not thirsty." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Long Xiao4Yun looked a little bit uneasy.

Long Xiao3Yun said calmly, "Since that is the case, what if I drink this cup for you?"

"Since you poured it, you drink it." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Long Xiao3Yun picked up the cup of wine, the cup of tea, the cup of water, and drank all three.

"In the days of old, brothers would swear oaths by blood. Since uncle and father are educated and intelligent people, there is no need for such showy rituals. But the custom of paying respects with incense, that can't be overlooked." Long Xiao3Yun said.

"Of what use is incense?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"To thank the heavens and the earth. To pay respects to the gods and the demons." Long Xiao3Yun replied.

"Demons and gods don't come and pay their respects to me. Why should I do so for them?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Right, uncle is simply an other-worldly and celebrated hero. Even gods and demons must hold you in high regards." Long Xiao3Yun said.

"I don't respect them, why would they respect me?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

Long Xiao3Yun was at a lost for words and coughed twice. Finally he said, "So uncle, you mean to say ..."

"Was it your father who is becoming sworn brothers with me, or is it you?" ShangGuan asked with a straight face.

"Of course it is father." Long Xiao3Yun replied.

"Then stand aside and be quiet." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Yes." Long Xiao3Yun answered.

He lowered his hands respectfully and retreated but the look on his face didn't change.

Long Xiao4Yun had a look of concern on his face, and said sternly, "That useless son of mine has no manners. Big brother, please do not take any offense."

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly slammed the table and said sharply, "With a son like that, how can he be your successor?"

He sighed and said, "It is a shame that he isn't my son."

Long Xiao4Yun sat there flustered, not knowing what he should say.

A person hastily made his way towards ShangGuan JinHong. He had thick eyebrows and curved eyes. When he finally was behind ShangGuan JinHong, he whispered, "The order has been given, but ..."

"But what?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"He is drunk. Extremely drunk." the man replied.

ShangGuan JinHong crossed his eyebrows and said, "Wake him with cold water. If he still doesn't wake, then use urine."

"Yes." the man replied, with a look of utmost admiration.

With the exception of dead people, any person can be woken up with urine.

Long Xiao4Yun didn't hear what was being said and finally asked, "Brother are you waiting for someone?"

"Who is worth me waiting for?" ShangGuan JinHong replied.

"Since everyone is already here, why don't we ..." Long Xiao4Yun said.

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly interrupted him with a laugh and said, "Your age?"

"Fifty-one." Long Xiao4Yun answered.

"You're older than I am, looks like I'll have to start calling you big brother." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Long Xiao4Yun had a look of urgency on his face as he immediately stood up and said, "It doesn't matter whether one is young or old, it only matters whether one is able or not. Big brother, please don't give me undeserved praise."

"Then since I am the elder brother, you should listen to me." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Yes." Long Xiao4Yun answered.

"Good, have a seat and drink ... first drink to our friends over here." ShangGuan JinHong said.

If you're able to sit and drink at this table, you must be pretty well respected.

ShangGuan JinHong hadn't yet moved his chopsticks, so everyone else's chopsticks felt like they weighed several hundred pounds. How could anyone eat?

"The dishes have already been served. If we don't eat, the food will go to waste. There's nothing I hate more than waste. Everyone, please help yourself." ShangGuan JinHong said.

After his last word, seven or eight chopsticks reached out.

"The fish tastes wonderfully fresh. Big brother why don't you try some?" Long Xiao4Yun said.

"I eat when I am hungry. Right now I am not hungry."
ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Eating when one isn't hungry is a waste as well." he added.

After he said that, several pairs of chopsticks fell to the table.

One of them had a pale face and a long body. On his hand was a jade ring that shined most exquisitely. A sword in sheathe that hung from his waist was also encrusted with several pieces of jade.

Although this person had yet to say a word, the look on his face showed that he was extremely agitated.

He had never before experienced this kind of agitation. Now, he regretted coming in the first place.

He shouldn't have come at all.

"Illustrious Jade Hin", that golden brand name. When people in the jewelry business hear the words "Illustrious Jade Hin", its like when people in the martial arts world hear the words "Little Li's Flying Dagger".

The young master of "Illustrious Jade Hin", XiMen Yu had always been pampered and served upon since birth. When he wanted to go east, no one even dared to suggest going west.

When he wanted to learn swordsmanship, many famous sword masters were summoned to teach him, and someone even went out to search for a suitable sword of legend for him.

At the age of ten, XiMen Yu had used this sword to kill ...

For no particular reason, except that he wanted to experience the thrill of killing someone. So someone was immediately found for him to kill.

Put someone like him at a table and force him to endure such a temperament, he will undoubtedly become agitated.

He also hadn't yet moved his chopsticks.

ShangGuan JinHong's eyes caught sight of XiMen Yu's eyes.

XiMen Yu wanted to turn his head and look else where, but ShangGuan JinHong's eyes had a magnetic presence to them and he just couldn't look away.

If he wanted to gaze at someone, that someone could only let him do so.

XiMen Yu felt his entire body slowly turning cold. Starting from the tips of his fingers, that cold spread to his back, into his bones, and into his heart.

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly exclaimed, "Is their poison in this food?"

"Why would there be poison?" XiMen Yu asked.

"If there isn't any poison, why aren't you eating?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"I am not hungry either, I don't want to waste food." XiMen Yu replied.

"You're really not hungry?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"Real ... really." XiMen Yu said.

"Wasting food is excuseable, but lying is not. Do you understand?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

XiMen Yu can barely hold in his anger any longer, and said, "Why would I lie about trivial matters such as this?"

"Lying is lying. It doesn't matter whether what you're lying about is trivial or important." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"I already said I'm not hungry." XiMen Yu said.

"It's already past the time for dinner. How could you not be hungry?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"Because what I ate earlier hasn't digested yet." XiMen Yu answered.

"You ate at the Fuiyun Restaurant in the south part of the city earlier, correct?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Correct." XiMen Yu said.

"You ordered a plate of sesame chicken, a bowl of eel and noodle soup, and an order of meat buns. You ate two pieces of chicken, half the bowl of noodles, and seven meat buns, correct?" ShangGuan JinHong said meticulously.

XiMen Yu laughed and exclaimed, "I can't believe that Chief

ShangGuan has investigated my every move and action down to the very last detail."

"Since you said that what you ate earlier hasn't been digested yet, it should all still be in your stomach then, right?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"I guess so." XiMen Yu responded.

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly lowered his head and said, "Cut open his stomach and let us see whether it is still there or not."

Although everyone had already realized he was purposely antagonizing XiMen Yu, they were surprised when it had escalated this far. No one dared to show any negative reaction or surprise to his words.

ShangGuan JinHong's order was irrevocable. Once it is given, it must be carried out.

XiMen Yu's face turned pale. He said hesitatingly, "Chief, you are just kidding with me right?"

ShangGuan JinHong ignored him completely. Four men dressed in yellow came over.

XiMen Yu leapt up and drew his sword. His movements were refined and accurate. Even though no one had seen him make a move yet, they knew for sure that his swordsmanship wasn't weak.

But before his sword could leave its sheath, there was a *XIAO* sound as the two chopsticks in ShangGuan JinHong's hand suddenly found themselves lodged deep inside XiMen Yu's left and right shoulder.

Chapter 67: The Pinnacle of Martial Arts

Everyone in the world knew that ShangGuan JinHong's skills were unfathomably deep and profound. However, no one had ever seen him attack. And now, everyone still hadn't seen him attack.

His hands didn't appear to have moved at all. They only saw him lightly press down onto the table before the chopsticks shot through the air. Then, XiMen Yu fell limp and dropped to the floor.

"Take him away and examine him carefully." ShangGuan JinHong said.

The men in yellow came over and carried XiMen Yu's body with them.

XiMen Yu's lips appeared to move slightly, but he was in so much fright that not a sound came out.

"If that food is really still in your stomach, I'll pay with my own life so that you won't die without a reason." ShangGuan JinHong said.

No one dared to speak. No one dared to move.

Everyone looked like they were sitting on a cushion of nails.

Each one of their clothes were soaked in cold sweat.

One of the men in yellow finally walked over and said, "We have finished examining him."

"What did you find?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"Nothing. His stomach was empty." the man in yellow said.

"Good." ShangGuan JinHong said.

His eyes swept across the faces of everyone there and said, "If you lie in front of me, you will suffer the same fate as him, does everybody understand?"

They all nodded their heads.

"Is anyone else also not hungry?" he asked.

"No, we're hungry ... we're hungry." everyone answered back.

They all started fighting eagerly over the food on the table. No one even bothered to chew, piece after piece of food went straight into their stomachs.

Suddenly, a person soaked from head to toe rushed in and stood by the doorway, his eyes were blood red and he looked disheveled and sluggish. He kept mumbling to himself, "A person clothed in purplish red, a person clothed in purplish red."

Ah Fei!

Long Xiao4Yun immediately stood up.

Ah Fei's eyes made their way to him and he said, "So it is you."

Although his eyes were dull and he looked drowsy and in disarray, there was a sword in his hand!

As long as there was a sword in his hand, it was enough to make Long Xiao4Yun feel uneasy.

Long Xiao4Yun started to take a few steps back.

Ah Fei slowly made his way forward.

The sword wobbled in his hand. His footsteps and the sword were both unsteady.

But once Long Xiao4Yun saw his sword, he turned around and ran.

Ah Fei leapt towards him. Before he reached them, everyone could already smell the stench of wine.

Long Xiao3Yun's expression changed now. He hooked the chair that his father was sitting on and hurled it towards Ah Fei hoping to block his path.

Ah Fei didn't see the chair at all and tripped. His entire body fell down and the sword flew out of his hands.

He couldn't even hold on to his sword!

Long Xiao4Yun was shocked but overjoyed. He turned around and picked up the sword. In a flash, the sword was pointed straight at the back of Ah Fei's head.

But he didn't stab forward.

Because in the corner of his eye he had caught glimpse of the expression on ShangGuan JinHong's face.

ShangGuan JinHong's face was expressionless to the point of horror. He sat there like a statue, not moving a single inch.

Because he didn't move, no one else dared to move either.

"This person dares to cause a scene in front of Big Brother, he deserves to die!" Long Xiao4Yun said.

ShangGuan JinHong was quite for a long while. He finally said, "There is a dog outside, have you seen it?"

"Yes, I think I have." Long Xiao4Yun answered.

"If you want to kill this person, then why not kill that dog instead." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Big brother, so what you're saying is, this person can't even be compared to a dog?" Long Xiao4Yun said.

"And what about you?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"Me ... ?" Long Xiao4Yun said, with a look of shock.

"He can't compare to a dog, but you're even worse. When dogs see him, even they don't run away." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Long Xiao4Yun looked dumbfounded.

ShangGuan JinHong's eyes looked to the crowd and asked, "Would any of you be willing to become sworn brothers with a dog?"

"Of course not!" everyone answered.

"Even they're not willing. Let alone me ..." ShangGuan JinHong said.

ShangGuan JinHong looked towards Long Xiao4Yun and said, "I think you and this dog would make the best of friends, why don't you two become sworn brothers instead?" His words were irrefragable. But who could endure this kind of insult?

Long Xiao4Yun's face was filled with sweat, and stuttered, "You ... you ..."

Long Xiao3Yun suddenly ran over and took the sword in his hand, and said, "This was all my idea, I had no clue that it would cause so much shame to me and my father. I am already unable to wash away my misdeeds. Only when my blood is spilled onto the floor can I repay what my father has done for me. It is a pity that my mother is not present, for I can't decide life and death without her presence."

He suddenly took the sword and cut off his own hand.

No one dared to react to this.

Long Xiao3Yun was in such pain that his entire body shook. Nonetheless, he bit down on his teeth and took his severed hand to ShangGuan JinHong and said, "Are you satisfied yet?"

ShangGuan JinHong's expression didn't change as he looked at him coldly and said, "You want to exchange this hand for the lives of you and your father?"

"I ..." Long Xiao3Yun said.

Before he could finish, the pain became too much and he fainted.

Even though Long Xiao4Yun felt extremely grieved inside, he dared not show it. He just stood there quietly.

"On your son's behalf, I'll let you two live. Now leave and don't ever let me see you again." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Ah Fei finally got up.

He looked like he was completely oblivious to what just happened. He looked like he was completely oblivious to everyone around him as well. His eyes finally spotted a jug of wine on the table and he slowly made his way towards it and snatched it into his hands.

He hugged the jug of wine in his arms extremely tightly as if it was his life.

DING, the jug was suddenly shattered.

Wine poured down.

Ah Fei's hand was trembling as it still held on to a piece of the broken jug.

"This wine is for humans. You're not worthy!" ShangGuan JinHong said.

He threw a piece of silver onto the floor and said, "If you still want to drink, go buy your own."

Ah Fei lifted his head and looked at him. He slowly turned

his body and walked.

The piece of silver was by his feet.

He stared at the piece of silver for quite a while, before finally bending down ...

A smile flashed across ShangGuan JinHong's face.

He looked even more intimidating when he smiled than when he didn't.

Suddenly, there was a cold flash of light.

A dagger struck down like lightning and pinned the piece of silver to the ground.

Ah Fei flinched and lifted his head up, his whole body suddenly froze.

A person who stood at the doorway looked at him and said, "The wine here is better than outside. If you want to drink, I'll pour a cup for you."

There was still one jug of wine left on the table.

The person walked over, poured a cup, and presented it to Ah Fei.

No one said a word. Even the sound of breathing could not be heard.

ShangGuan JinHong didn't say a word either.

He just silently stared at this person.

This person wasn't tall, but wasn't very short either. His clothes were raggedy and old. He looked like a feeble and decrepit middle-aged man.

But as ShangGuan JingHong watched him pour the wine, watched him give the cup to Ah Fei, not only did he not stop this person, he didn't show any reaction at all.

No one had ever dared to disobey ShangGuan JinHong's orders!

But this person took no heed in ShangGuan JinHong's orders whatsoever.

The cup of wine had reached Ah Fei's hand.

Ah Fei stared childishly into the cup. Two drops of tears slowly fell into the cup of wine.

He had always only been willing to bleed, his tears were something that he held back.

The middle-aged man's eyes began to water up as well, tears overflowed from the corners of his eyes. But on his mouth was still the same warm, friendly smile.

That warm friendly smile seemingly changed the decrepit looking man into a bright and radiant person. No one had ever imagined that a smile could be so powerful.

He didn't say a word either.

The feelings behind his warm smile and brimming tears were something that no one in the world could ever express into words.

Ah Fei's hand began to shake again uncontrollably. He suddenly let out a roar and smashed the cup of wine onto the floor. He turned around and ran towards the door.

The middle-aged man looked like he was just about to chase after him.

"Wait a moment!" ShangGuan JinHong said.

He kept walking for a second before stopping in place.

"If you wanted to leave, then you shouldn't have come in the first place. Since you have come, then why would you leave?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

The middle-aged man stood silent for a while, before saying, "You're right. Since I am already here, why should I leave?"

Before, he hadn't laid an eye on ShangGuan JinHong. Now, he slowly turned around.

His gaze finally met the gaze of ShangGuan JinHong.

A fiery blaze!

The glances exchanged by the two of them seemed to ignite a fiery blaze.

A silent, formless fiery blaze. Although none of them saw it with their own eyes, every single one of them felt it.

Every single one of their hearts were thumping wildly.

ShangGuan JinHong's eyes were like the hands of a demon, his gaze could suffocate any man's soul.

That middle-aged person's eyes were like an endless sea, vast and refreshingly blue. A vastness that could entrap all the monsters and demons in the world.

If ShangGuan JinHong's eyes were a blade, this person's eyes would be the sheathe!

Seeing those pair of eyes, everyone knew that he wasn't just any ordinary middle-aged man.

Some of them had already guessed who he was.

ShangGuan JinHong's voice finally broke the silence. "Where is your weapon?"

With a flicked of his wrist, a dagger appeared between his fingers!

Little Li's flying dagger!

After everyone saw the dagger, they knew that their guesses were correct!

It was Li XunHuan!

Li XunHuan had finally arrived!

His hand was incredibly steady. As if it was frozen in midair.

His fingers were long and slender, his fingernails neatly trimmed.

This hand seemed more appropriate holding a pen than a dagger. But in the martial arts community, this hand was the most valuable, and the most frightening hand of all.

The dagger was a very plain and ordinary dagger. But in this person's hand, that dagger became a terrifying weapon!

ShangGuan JinHong slowly stood up and walked to face Li XunHuan.

The distance between the two was no more than seven meters.

Yet, his hands were still inside his sleeves.

ShangGuan JinHong had dominated the world nearly twenty years ago with his "Dragon Phoenix Rings". In the "Book of Weapons", they were ranked second, which was one higher than "Little Li's Flying Dagger"!

In the twenty years after, no one had ever seen him use his rings.

Even though everyone knew that they were powerful, no one knew for sure just how powerful they were.

Were the rings in his hands right now?

Everyone's eyes shifted from Li XunHuan's dagger to ShangGuan JinHong's hands.

ShangGuan JinHong's hands finally emerged from his sleeves.

His hands were empty.

"Where are your rings?" Li XunHuan asked him.

"They are here." ShangGuan JinHong answered.

"Where?" Li XunHuan asked again.

"In my heart." ShangGuan JinHong replied.

"Your heart?" Li XunHuan said.

"The rings aren't in my hands, the rings are in my heart!"
ShangGuan JinHong said.

Li XunHuan's eyes suddenly shrunk.

ShangGuan JinHong's rings, they could not be seen!

Because they cannot be seen, they could be anywhere. They could be right before your eyes, right in front of your throat, or right next to your soul.

Even when your entire being has been destroyed, you still wouldn't know from where they came!

"The rings aren't in hand, but the rings are in the heart."

This is the pinnacle of martial arts!

This was the level of gods and immortals.

But no one understood. That is, no one except Li XunHuan.

Everyone else looked slightly disappointed.

A good number of people had wanted to see those rings, so they could recognize what true power was. But who would have known, that it was what they could not see, that was truly powerful.

In that moment, the radiance in ShangGuan JinHong's eyes

were pressing down intensely on Li XunHuan.

"Seven years ago, my hands had finally become formless."
ShangGuan JinHong said.

"I'm in awe." Li XunHuan said.

"You understand?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"Subtle and exquisite, there are no rings, there is no self. No trace left to be found, and no barrier left that is unbreakable." Li XunHuan said.

"Wonderful! You really do understand!" ShangGuan JinHong exclaimed.

"To comprehend is to not comprehend, to not understand is to understand.

The two of them were like two Zen masters engaged in a duel of rhetoric.

Except for the two of them, no one else understood a word.

They did not understand, that's why it was so terrifying ...

All of them slowly stood up and retreated to a corner of the room.

ShangGuan JinHong stared at Li XunHuan and said, "Li XunHuan, really is Li XunHuan."

Li XunHuan responded, "And ShangGuan JinHong can only be ShangGuan JinHong."

ShangGuan JinHong spoke, "You were originally a third

generation Tan Hua, worldly and educated, illustrious and famous, the envy of the entire world. Why have you ended up as a wanderer in the underworld of the martial arts community?"

"I come as I please, I go as I please." Li XunHuan replied.

"You can still leave?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

Li XunHuan paused for a second and responded, "I can't leave, nor do I want to leave!"

"Very well, make your move!" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"My moves are already here!" Li XunHuan said.

ShangGuan JinHong looked a little confused and asked, "Where?"

"In the heart. The moves are not in this dagger, the moves are in my heart."

ShangGuan JinHong's eyes suddenly shrunk as well!

Those who couldn't see where ShangGuan JinHong's rings resided, couldn't see where Li XuHuan's moves were either.

But when the rings arrive, the moves would emerge!

Everyone thought they could feel their presence.

Even though they all stood there quietly, they all felt as if they were in a struggle for life and death. Life and death that could be decided in a single breath!

Even though they had all retreated into a corner of the room,

they all still felt a dreadful aura.

Every single one of them felt their hearts contract!

The blood in Ah Fei's body was beginning to bubble!

When he ran out frantically, he didn't know what he was thinking, nor did he know what he was doing.

He was running from the truth.

But where could he run to? And how long could he hide for?

He couldn't run forever, because what he was running away from, was himself.

Li XunHuan and ShangGuan JinHong were staring at each other. Neither made a sound, neither made a move.

The only thing anyone could hear was the beating of their own hearts. The only thing anyone could feel was the sweat dripping from the hairs on their own arms.

Because once one of them made a move, it was bound to be a move that shook the heavens and earth.

This standoff could erupt at any second. This standoff could break at any moment.

And it could end in the exact same moment.

Because in that moment, one of them would definitely fall!

But who would be the one to fall?

"Little Li's flying dagger, never leaves the hand unless it hits!"

In these twenty years, no one has ever evaded Li TanHua's dagger!

But since ShangGuan JinHong's dual rings were ranked higher, were they more formidable?

The two of them were frozen in place.

The two of them were gleaming with confidence.

Was there anyone in the world who could guess the outcome of this battle?

Ah Fei had fallen to the ground, he was panting heavily. After a while, he lifted his head and looked around. He had no idea where he was.

He was in a small courtyard.

In the middle of the courtyard was a lonely willow tree shaking in the autumn wind.

On top of the porch was a half curled banner. The door was shut tight. Everything was silent inside the building.

This was where he had spent the night in a drunken stupor.

He had no idea how he wound up back here.

The door suddenly opened. A beautiful face peeked out of the door. As soon as waves of desire shot through his body, the face withdrew back into the house.

This was one of the people who had accompanied him.

Chapter 68: Between Gods and Demons

Ah Fei rose up and walked towards the door.

PENG, the door was shut and one could hear the lock slip into place.

Ah Fei pounded with all his might.

After a while, a voice from inside asked, "Who is it?"

"Me." Ah Fei responded.

"Who are you?" the voice asked.

"I am me."

A giggle came from inside and said, "This person is insane."

"From his tone of voice, he sounds like he's the owner of this place."

"But who recognizes him?"

"Who knows what kind of person he is? He looks like he's just seen a ghost."

Those voices sounded very familiar. Just last night, the same

voices kept speaking sweet and seductive words into his ears. Why were they totally different now?

Ah Fei suddenly felt a gush of anger sweep through him. In a fit of rage he rammed the door open.

Seven pairs of beautiful eyes were staring straight at him.

When he spent the night here, those seven pairs of eyes looked as soft as water and as sweet as honey.

But now, that sweetness had evaporated into smoke, and that water had frozen into ice.

Ah Fei stumbled in and snatched a jug of wine. It was empty.

"Where's the wine?"

"There isn't any!"

"Go fetch some!"

"Why should we? This isn't a winery."

Ah Fei staggered towards her, stared at her collar and shouted, "All of you really don't recognize me?"

One pair of beautiful yet cold looking eyes looked at him and said, "And you recognize me? And you know who I am?"

"I really didn't spend the night here?" Ah Fei said.

Another voice answered him, "This is definitely a place where you spend the night. But you're not the same person who spent the night here."

That sweet voice sounded extremely familiar.

Ah Fei's entire body began to tremble again.

He shut his eyes tightly. He didn't want to see her. He didn't dare to see her.

She was the one who even in his dreams he couldn't forget. He would willingly sacrifice anything and everything, just to see her for an instant.

But now, he would much rather die than cast an eye on her.

She was the same as she had always been.

But he, he was no longer the same person!

Everyone was still silent, everything was still motionless.

Dust from the ceiling started drifting towards the floor.

Was it being blown by the wind? Or by the frightening aura in the air?

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly took one step forward!

But Li XunHuan remained motionless!

A voice suddenly broke the silence, "To move is to not move, to not move is to move. Do you understand this?"

The voice sounded old and wise. Everyone in the room heard it very clearly.

But no one could see from where it came.

Another voice broke into laughter and said, "If that's the case, then to fight is to not fight, and to not fight is to fight. What's the purpose in fighting at all then?"

That voice was young, lively and sweet.

But no one saw from where it came either.

"The two of them fight because they do not understand the true nature of martial arts." the old voice said.

"You say that the two of them don't understand, but they both believe that they understand very clearly." the voice of the young girl giggled.

After those two sentences were spoken, except for Li XunHuan and ShangGuan JinHong, the look on everyone's face had changed.

Someone actually said that the two of them didn't understand martial arts.

If the two of them did not understand, then who in the world could claim that they did?

"They think that 'the weapon is not in hand, but in the heart', that this is the highest level of martial arts. But the truth is that they are off by a lot." the old voice said.

"Off by a lot?" the little voice giggled.

"By at least a hundred and eight thousand li." the old voice replied.

"So what then is the highest level of martial arts?" the young girl asked.

"When the hands are empty and the heart is empty, the weapon and the self become one. If they can comprehend this much, then they won't be off by far." the old man said.

"They won't be off by far? You mean that level isn't the highest either?" the young girl exclaimed.

"Yes, there is still one level higher." the old man said.

"The ultimate level of martial arts is when everything arises from nothing. There is no weapon and no self. Weapon and self are both forgotten. This is true formlessness, this is true omnipotence." the old man said explained.

At this point, neither Li XunHuan or ShangGuan JinHong dared to change the look on their faces.

"After hearing your explanation, I suddenly remembered a story." the little girl said.

"Hmm?" the old man replied.

"There is a story in Zen Buddhism, when the head student of the Fifth Patriarch, Shen-Hsiu, recited a verse:

'The body is like the Bodhi Tree,
the mind is like a mirror bright.
Every moment we work to keep it clean,
and let no dust alight.'

This was already an extremely high level of Enlightenment." the young girl said.

"Yes, this is similar to the idea of 'the weapon is not in hand, but in the heart'. Reaching this level is not easy at all." the old man said.

"But the future Six Patriarch Hui Neng answered with an even deeper verse:

'There is no Bodhi tree, nor is there a mirror bright.
There is nothing and nothing will be,
where would the dust alight?'
And thus he became the most revered figure of Zen Buddhism." the little girl said.

"Correct, that really is the highest level of Enlightenment. If one can reach that level, then one is in the company of gods and immortals." the old man said.

"If that is so, then the theories you are teaching me are the same as Zen Buddhism?" she asked.

"In all matters of the world, when one reaches the highest level, the theories are not much different than from everything else." the old man replied.

"So in everything we do, we must strive for 'No object, no self', because only then can we reach the pinnacle of perfection." she said.

"Exactly." the old man said.

"I finally understand now!" the young girl said.

"It is a pity that other people upon reaching the stage of 'no weapon in hand, weapon in heart', become overly ecstatic and conceited. Yet little do they know that that is only the

surface of something much deeper." the old man said.

"So when a person at that level already thinks they've reached the peak, then they will never be able to venture further." the little girl said.

"You're entirely correct." the old man said.

At that point, neither Li XunHuan or ShangGuan JinHong dared to break out in cold sweat.

"The venerable Mr. Sun?" ShangGuan JinHong suddenly said.

There was no reply.

"Since Mr. Sun has arrived, why does he not show himself?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

There was still no reply.

The wind blew in from the windows and made the curtains stand straight on their side.

If Li XunHuan and ShangGuan JinHong were to fight, there was not a person in the world who could hinder them.

Yet, the conversation between the old man and the little girl had completely sapped the competitive atmosphere from the room.

Both of them were still facing each other, both were still in the exact same stance as before. But everyone else in the room felt that they could breathe now. The dreadful intensity in the room had dissipated.

The terrifying aura of death had disappeared from the air!

Li XunHuan let out a long sigh and said, "Dragons show their heads but never their tails. Mr. Sun was definitely in our presence."

"Anybody can boast grand theories, the question is whether they can back up their words." ShangGuan JinHong said coldly.

"It's not easy to even come up with a theory such as that." Li XunHuan said with a laugh.

Before he could finish that sentence, there came a noisy rumbling from the outside.

Four people carrying a coffin walked into the courtyard.

It was a brand new coffin, the paint on its surface looked like it hadn't even dried yet.

The four people carried the coffin all the way into the reception hall.

One of the guards in yellow walked up to them and said, "You people have walked into the wrong place, leave now!"

One of the men carrying the coffin answered, "Is there a master ShangGuan here?"

"What business do you have with master ShangGuan?" the guard said.

"Then we haven't come to the wrong place. This coffin is for master ShangGuan." the man said.

The guard in yellow glared at them menacingly and said, "If you've come looking for trouble, then I think this coffin is better suited for the four of you."

"This coffin is made of precious Nanmu lumber. We aren't worthy of such a coffin." he said.

The guard in yellow's fist was already about to strike one of them in the face.

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly said, "Who ordered you to bring the coffin here?"

Once the guard heard his voice, his hand stopped in mid-air.

The man looked extremely frightened now, and said hesistantly, "It was a master Sung who gave us four silver liangs and ordered us to deliver this coffin to the grand reception hall of the Cloudy Inn. He specifically ordered us to deliver it to master ShangGuan in person."

"Surnamed Sung? What kind of person was he?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"A man, he didn't seem too old, nor did he seem very young. He was extremely generous but we didn't catch a glimpse of his face." one of them answered.

"He came to us in the middle of the night yesterday and even blew out the candles first. There was no way for us to see what he looked like." Another one of them added.

ShangGuan JinHong lowered his head in thought and didn't question them further.

He already knew that he couldn't get an answer out of them.

"This coffin is quite heavy ... it feels like there is someone inside." One of the men exclaimed.

"Open the coffin." ShangGuan JinHong said.

The lid hadn't been nailed shut. It was easily opened.

It was in this moment that the cold look on ShangGuan JinHong's face finally changed.

There was still no expression on his face. Even his eyebrows and lips stayed still.

But the look on his face had definitely changed.

So much so that he looked like a completely different person. Like someone who was wearing a mask.

He didn't want anyone to see the expression on his face right now.

There are a lot of people in the world who wore such masks. Normally you could never tell, but in times of urgency, that mask will definitely come on.

Some use it to hide their sadness, some use it to conceal their anger, some use it to force on a false smile, and some to feign an intimidating presence.

And there are some who use it to hide their fear!

What was ShangGuan JinHong's reason?

There really was a dead body inside the coffin!

The dead body was none other than ShangGuan JinHon's only son, ShangGuan Fei!

When ShangGuan Fei was killed, Li XunHuan had witnessed it.

Not only had he seen Jing WuMing kill ShangGuan Fei, he had also seen him bury the corpse.

How did the body end up here?

Who dug up the corpse?

Who sent it here? And for what reason?

Li XunHuan's eyes flashed with movement, he seemed deep in thought.

The mask on ShangGuan JinHong's face seemed to get thicker by the moment. He was silent for a long while before turning to Li XunHuan.

"You've seen this person before?"

"Yes." Li XunHuan replied.

"And what are you thinking now that you see him?"
ShangGuan JinHong asked.

The corpse looked like it was thoroughly cleaned. It didn't look like it was dug out of the ground at all. It had on a brand new robe, not a speck of dirt could be found, not a drop of blood could be seen.

Except for a single wound.

The wound was on his throat, about seven tenths of the way through.

"I think ... that he died a rather painless death." Li XunHuan said.

"You're saying that his death was extremely quick?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Death is not painful. It is the agony of waiting for death that is painful. I am certain that he did not have to endure this." Li XunHuan replied.

ShangGuan Fei's face looked like it was at peace, as if he was merely sleeping.

Someone had completely erased the frightened look he had on his face when he was killed.

Although ShangGuan JinHong wore a mask upon his face, that mask could not cover his eyes.

His eyes were burning with rage. They were directed at Li XunHuan.

"The number of people in the world who can kill him that quickly are very few." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Very few indeed. That number should be no more than five." Li XunHuan replied.

"And you are one of those five." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Li XunHuan nodded his head and said, "Right, I am one of those five. And so are you."

"And why would I kill him?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Of course you wouldn't. I just wanted you to understand, that the people who are able to kill him are not necessarily the ones who would want to kill him. And that the people who did kill him, are not necessarily the ones who can kill him." Li XunHuan said.

"There are a lot of things that happen in this world that we just can't control, that we just could never imagine happening." Li XunHuan added.

ShangGUan JinHong had stopped talking now. But his eyes were still set on Li XunHuan.

The look in Li XunHuan's eyes had become soft, it almost appeared to be sympathy. As if he had seen right through ShangGuan JinHong's mask and saw the shock and sadness in his heart.

He had always been the one who terrorized and tormented others.

Now he was the one who was being antagonized, and he knew not from who or where it came.

Blood is thicker than water. Once a son, always a son.

No matter who you are, the shock of losing a child was not a small one.

ShangGuan JinHong looked slightly uneasy. His cold emotionless appearance was gradually fading.

The sympathy in Li XunHuan's eyes was like a sledgehammer, slowly chipping away at ShangGuan Jing

Hong's iron mask.

He couldn't bear it any longer and suddenly shouted, "The confrontation between you and I is inevitable."

Li XunHuan nodded in agreement and said, "It is inevitable."

"Today ..." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Chapter 69: A True Gentleman

Because ShangGuan JingHon's only son had been killed, he was swept with uncontrollable rage. He wanted to fight Li XunHuan to the death. And he wanted to do so today ...

Li XunHuan cut off ShangGuan JinHong before he could finish and said, "If you want to duel to the death, I would gladly accept at any time. Except for today."

"Why?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"Today ... I only want to drink today." Li XunHuan answered sullenly.

His eyes looked at the corpse inside the coffin, and said, "There are certain times that are just not suitable for fighting, that are just not suitable for doing anything, except perhaps for drinking. Today is one of those times."

His words were very moving. Perhaps everyone else just didn't understand.

But ShangGuan JinHong understood him perfectly.

Because he understood perfectly well how he himself was feeling. Because with such a burden on his mind, to duel now would be like fighting with one hand tied.

He would be surrendering a huge advantage to his opponent!

Li XunHuan could have used this opportunity to his advantage but he didn't, even though he knew that opportunities like this were extremely rare. Perhaps, there would never be another opportunity such as this!

ShangGuan JinHong fell silent for a while before asking, "Then, when is a good time?"

"I've already said, anytime you wish." Li XunHuan replied.

"Where shall I go to find for you." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"You don't have to look. Just give the word and I will be there." Li XunHuan responded.

"When I give the word, you will hear me." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"When Chief ShangGuan speaks, the whole world listens. It won't be very hard to hear you." Li XunHuan said with a laugh.

ShangGuan JinHong was silent again. He finally spoke again, "If you want to drink, there is wine here."

"I'm worthy of drinking this wine?" Li XunHuan said with a laugh.

"If you aren't worthy, then there isn't a person in the world who is." ShangGuan JinHong said.

He turned around and poured two large cups of wine, and

said, "This cup, I drink to you."

Li XunHuan downed the cup in a single gulp. A large smile lit up across his face as he exclaimed, "Excellent wine! A delightful cup of wine!"

ShangGuan JinHong's cup was empty now as well. He stared into the cup and said, "This is my first cup of wine in twenty years."

PENG, the cup shattered as it hit the floor.

ShangGuan JinHong walked over to the coffin, lifted up his son's body, and made his way out.

Li XunHuan watched silently as he walked out of the door. He let out a long sigh as he said to himself, "Although, only ShangGuan JinHong can be ShangGuan JinHong, but why can't he also be a friend?"

He poured another cup of wine, finished it, then shouted, "The lover of a gentleman, why must she betray his intentions?"

PENG his cup fell to the floor and shattered as well!

Everyone in the room already looked like they were made of wood. As soon as Li XunHuan walked out of the door, they all let out a huge sigh of relief.

Some of them were quietly talking amongst each other.

"Li XunHuan really is Li XunHuan. In the entire world, I think only he can get ShangGuan JinHong to toast to him."

"It is a pity that the two of them didn't attack."

"For some reason I feel that these two people are somewhat similar."

"Li XunHuan and ShangGuan JinHong similar? ... Are you crazy?"

"Although their auras and actions are completely different, the two of them ... the two of them both aren't human. The things that they do, humans are just not capable of doing."

"Yes, there is some sense in your words, the two of them really are inhuman, except ... one of them is a saint, while the other one is a demon."

The line between kindness and evil is thin, the difference between a saint and a demon lies in between.

"Right, if Li XunHuan was not Li XunHuan, then he could very well be ShangGuan JinHong."

Ah Fei did not turn around.

Lin XianEr moved her chair and sat directly behind him, blocking the path to the door.

She sat for quite some time.

Ah Fei's posture stayed exactly the same.

The way he was standing looked somewhat funny.

Lin XianEr giggled and said, "Isn't it a little painful standing up like that? Why not sit down and relax. There is a chair

right next to me."

"You're not willing to sit? I knew you wouldn't be able to sit down here, it just isn't your taste."

"Then why don't you leave?"

"Although I'm blocking the door, you can always knock me aside. If not, there is a window over there. You can jump out like a little thief."

"You're afraid, aren't you? I know that although you want me dead, you wouldn't dare to lift a finger. You're scared to even bump into me. Because in your heart, you know that you're still in love with me. Isn't that correct?"

Her voice was as gentle and caring as ever.

Her laugh sounded even more charming and sweeter than before.

Because she loved to see people suffer, she wanted every single person to suffer from her.

It is a pity that the only people who suffer are those who love her.

Although she couldn't see the look of pain on Ah Fei's face, she could clearly see the veins on the back of his neck tense as if they were about to explode.

To her, this was one type of enjoyment, so she sat comfortably and watched. She even felt like pouring herself a cup of wine.

Suddenly, the chair was kicked over and she fell with it!

ShangGuan JinHong had returned with his son in his arms!

When the chair you're sitting on is kicked out from under, your heart feels like its been flipped over.

But Lin XianEr didn't say a word and didn't move a muscle. She knew that no matter what she did now, she would still look foolish.

ShangGuan JinHong was staring at Ah Fei's neck as well.

"Turn your head around and see who this person is!" he said.

Ah Fei still didn't move. But the veins on his neck were almost jumping out of his skin. Finally, he slowly turned his head around and looked at the person in ShangGuan JinHong's arms.

Now his eyes looked like they were about to jump too.

"You recognize him, don't you?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

Ah Fei nodded his head.

"He was alive several days ago, very much alive, am I correct?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

Ah Fei nodded his head again.

"And now that you see him dead before you, you aren't startled a bit, because you he was dead already, didn't you?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

Ah Fei paused for a while, then said, "Correct, I already knew that he was dead."

"How did you know this?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Because the person who killed him, is me." Ah Fei replied.

He said this sentence extremely casually. His eyes didn't even blink once. As if he had no idea the terrible consequences that those words could bring.

The girls inside the house were scared stiff.

Even Lin XianEr jumped a bit from the shock. In that instant, she felt a strange sensation in her heart. It almost seemed like sadness, like sympathy.

She had no idea why she would feel those things for Ah Fei.

But she knew that once ShangGuan JinHong made a move, Ah Fei would definitely not be spared.

ShangGuan JinHong could strike out at any moment.

She saw the look in Ah Fei's eyes, it was the same look as that of a dead person.

An extremely foolish dead person.

"Not only was this person extremely foolish, he also must be incredibly drunk. Why else would someone admit to something like that? He is totally hopeless, why should I care whether he lives or dies?"

She turned away and stopped looking at him.

She hoped that ShangGuan JinHong would kill him quickly, the faster the better, so it would stop bothering her.

But she didn't dare ask herself, "If I really didn't care about his life, then is something like this bothering me?"

ShangGuan JinHong still didn't make a move.

He was still staring intently into Ah Fei's eyes. As if he was trying to figure something out that he didn't understand.

But he couldn't see anything.

Ah Fei's eyes were completely empty.

These were not the eyes of a living person.

ShangGuan JinHong suddenly realized that the look in his eyes were somewhat familiar, like he had seen them before.

He had definitely seen them before.

When he took Jing WuMing's sword away and gave it to Ah Fei, Jing WuMing had the exact same look in his eyes.

When he took a person's life, the empty look in their eyes was exactly the same - completely void of feelings, completely void of life, completely oblivious to everything.

Ah Fei was waiting, silently waiting.

"You're waiting to die?" ShangGuan JinHong suddenly asked.

Ah Fei did not respond.

"You admitted to killing him only because you hoped that I would kill you, didn't you?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

Ah Fei did not respond.

A vicious smile flashed across ShangGuan JinHong's face, and he said, "Taskmaster Lu."

After he said those words, another person suddenly appeared.

No one knew that this person had been hiding here the entire time. Nor did anyone know whether anyone else could be hiding here as well. No one would have guessed that this person would be hiding this close to ShangGuan JinHong. Because if that was the case, then there would be countless people hiding here as well.

A person who no one else could see, this was a ghost.

Wherever ShangGuan JinHong went, this ghost would be following close behind.

His order was like an incantation. Only he could summon this ghost!

If Taskmaster Lu really was a ghost, he was definitely not a starving ghost.

Starving ghosts were never this obese.

He almost looked like a round ball, but his movements were agile. Out of nowhere he rolled out and said, "Your subordinate is here."

ShangGuan JinHong was still staring at Ah Fei.

"He wants to die, we won't let him." ShangGuan JinHong said slowly.

"Understood!" Taskmaster Lu replied.

"We will give him something else." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Understood!" Taskmaster Lu replied.

"We will give him wine, we will give him women. The more he wants, the more we will give him." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Understood!" Taskmaster Lu replied.

ShangGuan JinHong paused for a moment then continued, "No matter what he wants, we will give it to him!"

"Understood!" Taskmaster Lu replied.

He answered each time without thinking. His eyes suddenly wandered to Lin XianEr and he asked, "No matter who?"

"No matter who he wants, even if its an old lady, if he wants it, then give it to him!" ShangGuan JinHong said.

Taskmaster Lu smiled and said, "I understand now. I will go and bring an old lady for him immediately."

Lin XianEr bit down on her lips very hard. She finally couldn't hold it in anymore and said, "And what if he wants me?"

"I already said, anyone he wants." ShangGuan JinHong answered coldly.

"But ... but I am different, I am yours, besides you, no one may ..."

She walked over to ShangGuan JinHong's side with a smile on her lips.

Her smile was particular sweet, her movements were extremely enticing.

ShangGuan JinHong didn't even cast an eye on her. He suddenly slapped her across the face, and said, "Anyone can have you, why can't he?"

Lin XianEr's entire body was knocked back by his slap and she tumbled out into the courtyard.

"The reason I want to give him anything he wants is because I don't want to let him leave. I want to see what he is like in three months." ShangGUan JinHong said.

"Understood!" Taskmaster Lu replied.

ShangGuan JinHong turned around and walked out.

Ah Fei bit down extremely hard and grinded his teeth.

"I killed your son, why haven't you killed me yet?" he said in a husky voice.

ShangGuan JinHong had already walked out the door. He didn't turn his head around and said coldly, "Because I want you to live in pain. So that you won't even have the courage to die!"

"Anyone can have you, why can't he?"

"To live in pain, so that you won't even have the courage to die!"

Ah Fei curled up, curled up into a ball, as if he was trying to avoid an invisible whip.

That whip was unceasingly snapping at him.

Taskmaster Lu walked up to him grinning and said, "When your cup in life is empty, why bother holding it up to the moon? This is just how life is, no need to take it to heart."

He turned to the group of girls with a grimacing face and shouted, "Why don't you pour the young master some wine?"

This person had one face when he was talking with ShangGuan JinHong and another face when he was talking to Ah Fei.

Now as he spoke to the group of girls he had on yet another face.

Most people in this world have many different faces. When they want to switch faces, its like switching masks in a theatre. Its probably even easier than switching masks.

The more they switched, the faster they forgot what they really looked like in the first place.

The longer they kept their masks on, the harder it was to ever take them off.

Because they figured the more masks they have, the less disappointments they had to face up to.

But fortunately there are also those who don't have any masks, they have only one face, their own!

No matter what situations arise, no matter what failures occur along the way, their face will never change!

When they want to cry, they'll cry. When they want to laugh, they'll laugh. When they want to live, they'll live. And when they want to die, they'll die!

Even in the face of death, they would never compromise who they were!

That is the nature of a true man!

If these kind of people didn't exist, then life would really be nothing but one huge disappointment.

And who knows what would become of the world then.

The wine has arrived.

Taskmaster Lu poured a cup and said, "Drink up! The more wine you drink, the more you'll realize that all the women in this world are the same. No need to take them so seriously."

Ah Fei bit down on his teeth and said, "They're all not the same."

"Then who do you want?" Taskmaster Lu said with a laugh.

Ah Fei's eyes lit up with anger as he slowly said, "I want your wife!"

Night.

The night market.

The night market is always full of life. You are bound to meet all sorts of different people here.

But Li XunHuan felt as if he was the last person left in the world. That not another soul existed.

Because the people he cared for had become distant, very distant. They had changed into people he no longer even recognized, almost unreal, such that he didn't feel that they existed anymore.

He had already heard that Long Xiao4Yun and his son had disappeared from sight for quite some time, but ...

What about Lin ShiYin?

Without a trace, without a single word. All that remains is longing, forever persistent memories.

"Even until the very end of time, Some wounds still refuse to heal."

Although the meaning behind these two lines of poetry are quite simple, the emotions and feelings that they encompass are deeper than the ocean.

But except for those who have actually have felt such a thing, would anyone know just how bitter and painful that feeling tastes?

In the distance the sounds of a flute accompany a sorrowful song.

The lonely flute seems to be talking to the night sky.

"Why are we so passionate?

Why are we so love stricken?

When flowers are passionate, they wither and die.

When people are love stricken, they become emaciated ...

He is at the edge of existence, why wouldn't he be emaciated?

A man and his golden jar of wine, why wouldn't he be inebriated?

The drunken eye watches in opposition as others become pairs.

But it surpasses memories of tears in a dark and lonely place ..."

"That flute player is lonely enough by himself, why must he peddle his tears and sadness to others as well?"

Li XunHuan downed his cup of wine in a single gulp. He suddenly started to strike a beat on the cup with his chopsticks and softly sang.

"Flowers raised without emotion,

Sooner or later will still wither and die,

People without passion, will still end up tired and emaciated,

Without love,

Where would life find its flavor?

Memories of tears in a dark and lonely place, are still better than not being able to shed tears at all."

The sounds of the flute slowly started to dwindle. Suddenly the sounds of laughter emerged.

And just what kind of flavor did this laughter have?

What about Ah Fei?

For half the day Li XunHuan had been tirelessly searching, scouring for news.

But no one knew where he ran off to, no one had ever seen such a person.

Li XunHuan had no idea that Ah Fei had wound up at the headquarters of the Gold Currency Union.

But even if he did know, he would have had no idea where such a place was.

Lanterns are swaying in the wind. Wine is wavering in his cup.

Thick and murky wine. Dark and gloomy lanterns.

He was drinking at a small noodle stand.

The entire street was filled with small stands. The people who came here were all normal people. No one recognized him and he didn't recognize anyone else.

He enjoyed this kind of atmosphere. Although it was dreary

and desolate, he felt that it was a nice escape.

Success and failure in the world, happiness and sadness in life, these things meant nothing to the people here. As long as there was a cup of wine, that was more than enough.

In a place such as this, there was no such thing as amorous laughter, nor were there regretful songs of grief.

The night is this peaceful, the night is this tasteless ...

Suddenly, this quiet stillness was disturbed.

Someone is shouting and cursing.

"No good drunkard! You're shameless! Drinking without paying! Even if that wine's already down your throat I want you to cough it all up!"

Li XunHuan couldn't help but turn around.

He turned around so quickly only because he heard the words 'drunkard'.

He saw a person clinging on to a jug of wine. Even though he had been beaten to the floor, that person seemingly cared not for his life but only for taking another sip from the jar.

An old man with a grease cloth wrapped around his waist kept shouting and cursing as his hands kept beating down on the drunkard.

Li XunHuan let out a sigh as he walked over, and said, "Let him drink, I'll pay for it."

The cursing stopped, the beating stopped as well.

Money can tie a person's hands and money can seal a person's mouth.

The person on the floor could barely stand up. He raised the wine to his mouth and poured as his head and body was totally drenched. But he seemed not to care one bit.

He looked like he was trying to drown himself in alcohol.

"If it weren't for some sad memories, how could a person end up like this?"

"If that person was not passionate, how would sad memories come to be?"

Li XunHuan suddenly felt very sympathetic and said, "It is very unappetizing to eat alone, I still have some dishes and wine at my table over there. How would you like to come over and join me?"

That person finished another gulp of wine, suddenly jumped to his feet and shouted, "Who do you think you are? You think you're worthy of drinking with me? Even if you bought me another three hundred cases of wine, I still wouldn't drink with you ..."

At this point that person's scolding stopped and his two hands suddenly wrapped around his own neck.

Li XunHuan appeared a little bit shocked and said, "You ... it's you?"

That person suddenly smashed the jar onto the floor, turned around and fled.

Li XunHuan ran after him, "Wait a moment, wait a moment, friend, you don't recognize me at all?"

The person ran even faster, "I don't recognize you, and I don't want to drink your wine ..."

The two of them, one chasing, one fleeing, in the blink of an eye, had ran out of sight.

Anyone who saw this would think that there was something wrong with them.

"That person who was stealing wine turns out to be crazy. Even knowing that he would be beaten he still comes to drink. Then, when someone offers to pay for his wine, he turns and flees."

"The person who was offering to buy him wine is crazy as well. Even after his money has been taken, and he is being scolded and cursed at, he still calls the drunkard a friend. This kind of person I've never seen before."

Of course he has never seen this kind of person before, because there are very few in this world.

Who was the person running away?

Why did he start running as soon as he saw Li XunHuan?

Other people obviously would not know the reason. But Li XunHuan himself would have never imagined that in a place like this, in a surrounding such as this, that he would run into that person.

The first time Li XunHuan saw this person was under the

balcony of a house on a long street. There were a lot of people on this street.

His clothes were as white as snow. Among the multitude of people, he was like a crane among chickens.

Even if all the gold in the world were piled up in front of his face, he would not be willing to say a single word to those whom he despised.

But now, for a measly bottle of wine, he not only endured other people's ridicule and insults, but also was beaten like a pig upon the muddy ground.

Li XunHuan couldn't believe that these two were the same person. He simply didn't want to believe.

But he couldn't deny the truth.

The person who laid sprawled in mud in front of him was none other than the once high and mighty Lu FengXian!

What had caused such a change? Such a quick, drastic, and frightening change!

The street lights faded into the distance as the stars seemed to be getting closer.

Lu FengXian suddenly stopped running.

Because he was in the same position as Ah Fei, the only person he was running from was himself.

There are a lot of people who try to run away from themselves in this world, but not a single one has ever escaped!

Li XunHuan stopped a good distance behind him. He bent over and started to cough. He noticed that he wasn't coughing as frequently but when his cough did arise, he had a hard time making it stop.

Isn't it the same case for lovesickness?

When you reminisce less and less about someone, it doesn't mean that you've forgotten them. It only means that these memories have become ingrained into you.

When Li XunHuan finished coughing, Lu FengXian asked him, "Why didn't you let me run away?"

He tried to gather his poise as he spoke, but was very successful.

His voice trembled like a little rabbit after being plucked from a frozen river.

Li XunHuan didn't respond, because he didn't want his words to hurt him.

Because any response he gave would have hurt him.

"I didn't owe you anything, and didn't have to do anything for you, why did you have to force me?" Lu FengXian asked.

Li XunHuan finally let out a long sigh and said, "I am the one who is indebted to you."

"Even if so, I don't need you to repay me." Lu FengXian said.

"There is no way for me to repay what I owe to you, but at least you can let me buy you a cup of wine." Li XunHuan

said.

Lu FengXian let out a slight laugh and said, "I haven't forgotten, you've asked me before."

Lu FengXian's hand kept shaking, shaking so much that he couldn't even hold his cup steady.

He held the cup with two hands but still couldn't stop the wine from spilling from the bowl and from his mouth.

Only several days ago, this pair of hands were lethal killing weapons!

No matter what had happened to cause such a change, the shock that it caused him was just frightening.

Li XunHuan couldn't imagine what it could be.

Lu FengXian reached out and poured more wine.

PENG, his hand accidentally knocked over the jar.

His eyes turned and stared at his hand, for a good while he didn't blink once. Then he suddenly let out a roar and shoved his hand into his mouth.

He kept shoving and he kept biting.

Blood spilled out from the corners of his mouth.

Li XunHuan originally didn't want to stop him from whatever he did. But now he couldn't help but try to pull his hand from his mouth.

Lu FengXian shouted madly, "Let go of me, I want to bite if

off, bite it off with my own mouth, and swallow it whole."

This hand was once his most proud and precious possession. But when a person is stricken with grief, they always want to destroy that which is most precious to them.

Because the only way to lessen the pain is by destruction!

Thorough destruction!

"If someone has wronged you, the person who should die is them. Why are you torturing yourself for?" Li XunHuan said sullenly.

"I'm the one who deserves to die, I'm the one ..." Lu FengXian shouted.

He tried with all his might to push away Li XunHuan's hand, but ended up falling off his chair and onto the ground.

He didn't try to get back up. He just laid on the floor and started to cry.

He finally told his entire story to Li XunHuan.

The story he heard in his ears was his story, the person he saw in his eyes was Lu FengXian, but the one who came to his mind was Ah Fei!

Li XunHuan's heart suddenly turned cold.

Did Ah Fei suffer the same kind of shock?

Did Ah Fei change and end up the same way?

Li XunHuan had planned not to say anything more to Lu

FengXian, but suddenly he couldn't help but utter, "Why do you still stay in this place for?"

"If I don't stay here, where else would I go?" Lu FengXian answered.

"Go back, back to your family." Li XunHuan said.

"Family ..." Lu FengXian said.

"It's like you're living through an illness right now, and there is only two cures for this illness." Li XunHuan said.

"Two cures." Lu FengXian said.

"The first is family, the second is time. As long as you return home ..." Li XunHuan said.

"I won't return home." Lu FengXian said.

"Why?" Li XunHuan asked.

"Because ... because it's no longer my home anymore." Lu FengXian replied.

"Family is family, that can never change. That's why family is so valuable." Li XunHuan said.

"Even if family never changes, I have changed. I am no longer who I once was." Lu FengXian said.

"If you're willing to stay at home and rest peacefully for some time, you'll definitely be able to return to who you once were." Li XunHuan said.

He wanted to continue, but someone behind him interrupted

and said, "And for those who have no family, is this illness uncurable then?"

Chapter 70: The Venomous Heart of a Woman

A sweet and gentle voice that could urge people to murder.

Li XunHuan didn't turn around. Lu FengXian abruptly stood up and ran out in a fit of madness.

It was like he had just seen a ghost.

Li XunHuan didn't need to turn around to figure out who it was.

He already understood the meaning behind what the person just said.

"Ah Fei is the one who has no family."

Li XunHuan's heart sank. He clenched his fist and said, "I would have never imagined that I would run into you here, that you would come to such a place."

That person was obviously Lin XianEr.

She laughed and said, "I don't usually come to a place like this, but I knew that I would be able to find you here. In order to find you, I'd be willing to go anywhere."

"You shouldn't have come looking for me, because now

you're going to regret it!" Li XunHuan said coldly.

"Regret it? Why would I? We are old friends. Since I knew you were around, how could I not stop by to see how you were doing?" Lin XianEr said.

Her voice became more alluring as she continued, "You should know that all this time I've always thought about you."

"And you should know that I'm aware of how you treated Lu FengXian and Ah Fei." Li XunHuan answered.

He didn't continue on.

He never liked to make threatening remarks. Because he felt that he never had to.

"So if I threw away Ah Fei like I threw away Lu FengXian, what will you do, kill me?" Lin XianEr said.

"You understand what I mean." Li XunHuan said.

"All I know is that you've always tried to convince him to let go of me. Since I've let go of him first, haven't I done you a favor?" Lin XianEr said.

"It's not the same." Li XunHuan said.

"How is it any different?" Lin XianEr said.

"I only wanted you to leave him, I never wanted you to destroy him." Li XunHuan said.

"And what if I've already destroyed him?" Lin XianEr said.

Li XunHuan turned around and stared into her eyes and said, "Then you will definitely regret coming here today."

His expression was still very serene. But for some reason Lin XianEr felt an incredible pressure being forced down upon her such that she couldn't even let out a smile.

It was very rare for her to not be able to smile.

Her smile was always one of her most formidable weapons. Except for the time when she encountered ShangGuan JinHong, this was the only other instance when her smile was totally ineffective.

She felt exactly the same now that Li XunHuan was in front of her. When a person's confidence is completely sapped, then it will show in that their smile.

After a long while, she slowly started to shake her head and said, "I know that you won't do anything to me."

"You're that certain?" Li XunHuan said.

"Yes." Li XianEr said.

"Not even I'm that certain, sometimes I do things that even I would never imagine myself doing." Li XunHuan said.

"But if you're really going to make me regret it, you're going to regret it even more." Lin XianEr said.

"How so?" Li XunHuan said.

"If you ever want to see Ah Fei again ..." Lin XianEr said.

"You know where he is?" Li XunHuan said excitedly.

"Of course I know." Lin XianEr said.

Lin XianEr started to regain her smile again as she spoke, "I'm afraid that I am the only person in this world who can lead you to him. I'm also the only person who can save him ... since I can destroy him, I can obviously save him as well!"

Li XunHuan's expression changed.

Because he realized that she wasn't lying this time.

Lin XianEr can be a very scary person when she lied, but she was ever scarier when she told the truth. Because for someone like her, to get her to speak the truth, the price you had to pay was definitely going to be high.

Li XunHuan started to rub his fingers together because his fingertips suddenly started to feel cold. Finally he asked her, "Fine, what do you want?"

Lin XianEr just stared at him and didn't say a word.

"Just what exactly do you want?" Li XunHuan said.

Lin XianEr smiled and said, "There used to be a lot of things that I wanted in this world ... but now, all I want is to stare at you for a little longer."

She bit on her lips and continued with a smile, "Because I've never seen you angry before. I've always wondered what Li XunHuan would look like when he became angry. And since this moment is before me now, I simply can't let it slip away."

Li XunHuan fell silent for a while and sat down. He pulled

one of the candles on the table towards his face and then poured himself a cup of wine.

Since she wanted to see, he would let her see. He wanted to make sure that she saw nice and clearly as well.

"When women want something, its best to let them have it. They'll soon realize that what they wanted isn't really as spectacular as they had in mind."

"Because a woman's interest in a particular thing can never last very long. But if you were to deny her what she wanted, then that would just increase her interest even more."

This is one of the problems that women have. Thousands of years ago they had this problem. Thousands of years later, they will still have this problem.

But the strange thing is, over these many years, only very few men have understood this problem that women have.

Li XunHuan sat there slowly sipping his wine.

Lin XianEr smiled at him and said, "You're a really strange person. Not only are your words strange, and your actions strange, even the way you drink is strange. Every time that I see you drinking wine, I suddenly want to become the cup in your hands. Because I am dying to know if you treat women as gently as you treat the wine cup in your hands."

Li XUnHuan only listened.

"Actually, the way you deal with women is even more strange, you always seem to know what they're thinking, and you always do exactly what they hope you to do ... even at times when you do nothing, they still manage to fall for

your bait." Lin XianEr said.

She sighed and continued, "So even with the most venomous women, once they encounter you, there is no way they'll ever escape."

Li XunHuan still sat there listening.

"Everytime I run into you, I always feel that it has been an interesting day. But afterwards when I carefully think about it, I realize that I've been had, that you haven't said a single word." Lin XianEr said.

Sometimes the people who are most capable at talking are those who don't talk at all.

It is a pity that not many people understand this either.

"But this time I'm not going to fall for it, this time I want to hear you speak." Lin XianEr said.

"Once you're done staring at me, then I'll talk." Li XunHuan said.

"I've already seen enough." Lin XianEr said.

"Then, what else do you want?" Li XunHuan asked.

Lin XianEr stared intently at him. If her eyes had teeth and a mouth, she would have swallowed him whole by now.

When a woman such as her is staring at you, although very enjoyable, there is something very intolerable about it. Its as if she was purposely trying to drive you crazy.

Only Li XunHuan could endure something like this.

"I don't want anything at all, I only want you!" Lin XianEr said.

"You want me?" Li XunHuan said.

"Giving yourself in exchange for Ah Fei, don't you think that is fair?" Lin XianEr said.

"No." Li XunHuan said.

"What's so unfair about it? You don't think that he's mine anymore?" Lin XianEr said.

"Yes, since you've already crushed him ... " Li XunHuan said.

"It's because I've crushed his heart, that he will be mine forever. But if I go and save him, then he will no longer be mine anymore." Lin XianEr said.

Of course Li XunHuan understood this. Its because he understood this that he is in pain.

Lin XianEr laughed and said, "So if you want me to go and rescue him, you'll have to replace him with yourself. If you won't agree to this, then you can forget about ever seeing him again."

Li XunHuan slowly finished his wine before walking up to her and said, "Looks like all I can do is agree, am I right?"

Lin XianEr laughed even more seductively and said, "I promise that you won't regret this ..."

Her voice suddenly stopped.

Li XunHuan's hand slapped her right across the face.

But now only did she not avoid it, she let out a seductive whimper and fell into his chest and panted.

"If you want to hit me, then hit me. As long as you agree, I'll willingly let you hit me every day and every night."

Suddenly someone clapped their hands and said, "Very well. Since she said that, then why don't you hit her once more?"

Chapter 71: A Battle of Wits

The lantern hanging from the awning of the noodle stand had already been stained black by candle smoke.

Under the dim light stood a person with big eyes and long pigtails.

"Miss Sun!" Li XunHuan exclaimed.

"I've always hated seeing women being hit by men. But this time, I'm rather happy seeing such a thing." Sun XiaoHong said.

"I'm happy too, I enjoy being hit by him." Lin XianEr said.

She hung onto Li XunHuan's arm and said with a smile, "If you're jealous, you can come over and have a cup of wine with us. Alcohol can relieve jealousy."

Sun XiaoHong really walked over. She poured wine into Li XunHuan's cup and finished it in a single gulp.

She stuck out her tongue, knitted her brow and said with a smile, "Although cheap wine is really indistinguishable from good wine if you drink a lot, the first gulp is really hard to swallow."

Lin XianEr smiled and replied, "The next time Miss Sun visits our house, we'll treat her to the best wine we have!"

She smiled at Li XunHuan and asked, "Isn't that correct?"

Before Li XunHuan could answer, Sun XiaoHong said, "Your smile is really beautiful. Even though I'm a woman, I just can't help but keep staring."

Lin XianEr laughed and said, "Little girl, you're not a woman yet. You're still just a little child."

"You might as well laugh it up now, because very soon you won't be able to laugh at all." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Hmm?" Lin XianEr said.

"Because there is no way that he will promise anything to you." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Hmm?" Lin XianEr said.

"Because anything that you are capable of, I can do the same." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin XianEr laughed and said, "And what can you do? Little children will be little children. Even though they don't understand anything, they act like they know it all."

Lin XianEr giggled as she continued, "There are some things that you can do as long as you're a woman, but whether you do it well or not depends on the person ... do you understand what I mean?"

Sun XiaoHong blushed slightly, bit her lips and said, "What I can do is take him to Ah Fei."

"You know where he is?" Lin XianEr said.

"Of course, and I know how to save Ah Fei as well" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Hmm?" Lin XianEr said.

"In order to save him, there's only one way." Sun XiaoHong said.

"And what is that?" Lin XianEr said.

"By killing you! In order to save him, then we have to kill you. As long as you no longer exist in this world, then he will be freed from his pain and suffering." Sun XiaoHong replied.

Li XunHuan drank down another cup of wine, let out a big laugh and said, "Well said!"

Lin XianEr let out a sigh and said, "I can't believe you're the same as Ah Fei. Don't you know that the words that come out of most women's mouths can't be trusted? You really believe that she can bring you to find Ah Fei?"

"Even all the men who lie in this world raise women who are honest." Li XunHuan said.

"That's right. Don't think that all the women in this world are like you." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Fine, then let me ask you. Where is Ah Fei right now?" Lin XianEr asked.

"He is with my grandfather right now. My grandfather has already taken him away from ShangGuan JinHong's hands."

Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin XianEr laughed and looked at Li XunHuan and said, "And you believe this sort of lie? Who in the world could possibly rescue Ah Fei out of ShangGuan JinHong's hands?"

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "In this world, there is only one. And that is her grandfather, the Venerable Mr. Sun."

Lin XianEr's expression changed, and said, "Fine, if that's the case, then I want to come along and see for myself."

"That can't be done! He doesn't want to see you." Sun XiaoHong said.

"And anyway, we have no reason to let you live anymore." Sun XiaoHong added coldly.

"You want me to die?" Lin XianEr said.

"You should have been dead a long time ago." Sun XiaoHong said.

"But have you thought about who could ever bear to kill me?" Lin XianEr said.

"You think I can't find someone who will kill you?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"In this world, there's only one man who could bear to kill me. But even he wouldn't dare make a move." Lin XianEr said.

Her eyes moved to Li XunHuan and said, "Because he knows that if he does kill me, Ah Fei will still hate him."

"You seem to have forgotten that I'm neither a man nor do I care whether Ah Fei hates me or not." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin XianEr burst into laughter and said, "Little girl, don't tell me that this is going to be the location of a duel, and that you want to challenge me?"

"You're totally correct." Sun XiaoHong said. "You can choose the place, but I will choose the time."

"And when did you have in mind?" Lin XianEr said.

"Right now." Sun XiaoHong replied.

Men aren't the only ones who have duels, sometimes women have duels as well.

But do women duel in the same manner that men do?

"I've chosen a time, now you choose a place." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin XianEr seemed to think for a while and said, "No need to select the place, right here is fine, except ..."

"Except for what?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"How will we compete in this duel?" Lin XianEr said.

"A duel is a duel, how many other ways are there?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Of course there are many, there are scholarly duels, martial duels, weapon duels, lightness duels, poison duels, and so forth. And since we are women, the way in which we duel should be a little more refined and elegant." Lin XianEr said.

"Then how do you propose that we duel?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"You want me to decide how we duel as well?" Lin XianEr said.

"She might suggest a poison duel." Li XunHuan suddenly said.

Sun XiaoHong smiled at him and said, "A poison duel is not a problem, my seventh uncle is a master at using poison. His abilities are definitely not below that of the Five-Poisons Child. Except that he only uses poison to save people, never to kill people."

"If he is able to use poison to save people, then his skills must be miraculous. Because using poison to cure people is definitely much harder than using it to kill." Lin XianEr said.

Lin XianEr let out a sigh and said, "It looks like I really can't compete with you in using poison."

"Choose whatever you want." Sun XiaoHong said.

Since she seemed that confident in her skills, Li XunHuan didn't say another word. A student of the Venerable Mr. Sun's martial arts, he really wanted to witness her skills.

Lin XianEr looked over at Li XunHuan, then said, "In front of master like Li TanHua, it'll be pointless for us to compete in martial arts. We'd only be making fools out of ourselves."

"Then what do you suggest?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Since we are women, then we should compete as women

do." Lin XianEr said.

"There is a special way in which women compete?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Of course." Lin XianEr said.

"What is it." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Men will always be physically stronger than women, but there are certain things women are much more capable in, that most men would struggle to do at all."

"Such as?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"For example, having babies ..." Lin XianEr said.

"Having babies?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Correct, having babies is every woman's specialty. It is also every woman's glory. Women who are incapable of giving birth are looked down upon by everyone, don't you agree?" Lin XianEr said.

Sun XiaoHong blushed again and said, "Don't tell me ... "

"We can compete to see who can have more babies, and who is faster." Lin XianEr said.

"You're crazy! How can we compete in such a way?" Sun XiaoHong shouted.

"Who says we can't? You're not able to have babies or something?" Lin XianEr said.

Sun XiaoHong's entire face was red now. She could neither

admit or deny it.

"If you think that this will take too long, then we can think of something else." Lin XianEr said.

"Of course we should compete in something else." Sun XiaoHong said.

"There is something that all men are willing to do, that even the most able women would be hesitant in doing." Lin XianEr said.

She let out a laugh and continued, "Since you don't want to compete in something in which all women can do, then how about we compete that only a few women dare to do?"

"Let me hear what it is first." Sun XiaoHong said.

"We can take off our clothes ... it'll be a contest to see who can strip entirely naked first. If I lose to you, I'll willingly give you my head." Lin XianEr said.

They were in a night market. Although the people here usually didn't bother with other people's business, if there were two women taking off their clothes here, they would definitely not be able to keep away even if they wanted to.

Sun XiaoHong, her face entirely red, bit her lips and said, "No wonder even the smartest men are afraid to gamble with women. Because of women like you that always find a way to weasel out of losing."

"Taking advantage of men is every woman's right. Any woman who can't take advantage of men is either very stupid or very ugly." Lin XianEr said.

"I'm not a man," Sun XiaoHong said.

"And I never tried to take advantage of you. You're the one who said that I could choose how we competed." Lin XianEr.

"But how would I have known that you would choose such shameless things?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Then you can only blame yourself. If you wanted to kill me, then why didn't you just attack? Who told you to have such a big mouth and suggest dueling this and competing that." Lin XianEr said.

Lin XianEr laughed and continued, "But it's not your fault, I've rarely met any women who didn't have big mouths."

So it turns dueling is much better suited for men.

Because duels are settled with fists not words. The more one talks, the lower one's confidence and competitiveness drops.

Whenever you see two people about to fight get into a shouting match before hand, most likely that fight will never happen.

But there is a saying that gentlemen fight with their words and not their hands.

The autumn wind is blowing, the evening sun setting in the west. Two women stand facing each other not saying a single word, waiting for some decision to be made concerning life and death.

Who had ever seen a setting such as this?

No one would have even heard of such a thing.

"Women will be women."

Although men and women are equal, there are some things in this world which women will never do.

And when women try to do these things anyway, it will always be in vain.

"Women will be women."

No one can ever understand them.

The smile on Lin XianEr's face was extremely cute and sweet.

Seeing the smile on her face, Li XunHuan suddenly thought of Blue Scorpion.

Although Blue Scorpion was somewhat looked down upon as a woman, there still was something extraordinary about her character.

He suddenly felt that it was a pity that Blue Scorpion had died.

Sun XiaoHong's blushed red face suddenly turned green.

"We've set the time, place, and method for this duel. So whether you want to go ahead is all up to you." Lin XianEr said.

Sun XiaoHong shook her head.

"Since you don't want to duel, then I'm going to leave." Lin XianEr said.

"Just leave then." Sun XiaoHong said.

She sighed and added, "Just blame it on your bad luck."

"Do you mean your bad luck? Or my bad luck?" Lin XianEr said.

"Yours." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin XianEr couldn't help but ask, "Why is my luck bad?"

"Although the words coming out of my mouth are vicious, if I actually had to attack I don't think I would be as vicious. I never really intended on killing you, maybe just injuring you slightly to teach you a lesson." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin XianEr said, "Then don't you mean my luck is rather good then?"

"If I had injured you, and another person came to kill you, then there's no way that I would let them, correct?" Sun XiaoHong said.

She laughed and continued, "But if someone came to kill you now, then I wouldn't care a single bit."

Before she was even finished, Lin XianEr had turned around.

In certain situations, Lin XianEr's reaction time is not slower than Li XunHuan or Ah Fei.

She looked all around her and in every direction and in every dark corner.

But she didn't see anyone.

Sun XiaoHong grabbed Li XunHuan's hand and said, "Let's go, I don't like watching people get killed."

"You're saying someone is here to kill me?" Lin XianEr said.

"Did I ever say that?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Where is the person, did you see them?" Lin XianEr said.

Sun XiaoHong didn't respond to her.

Lin XianEr was starting to panic now and said, "I don't see anyone here at all."

"Of course you don't see anyone. Once you see someone, it'll already be too late." Sun XiaoHong said coldly.

"If I can't see them, then how come you can?" Lin XianEr said.

"Because the person they want to kill isn't me." Sun XiaoHong replied.

She smiled and continued, "Of course they wouldn't want to see you if they were trying to kill you. Because once they see you, they won't be able to kill you."

"Who ... who are they?" Lin XianEr asked.

"How should I know who is after you? You should know better than I do." Sun XiaoHong.

Lin XianEr was still glancing around her in all four directions, her eyes starting to panic with fear.

She rarely felt any fear.

Because she always felt confident that she could convince any person trying to kill her to do otherwise.

But now she couldn't see her assailant, and her assailant didn't want to see her. Her only weapon had been taken away.

"Don't tell me even you can't think of who is trying to kill you? Is it because that there are way too many people who want you dead?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin XianEr was in disarray and started wiping away her sweat.

Her every action and her every movement was always seductive and enticing.

But the way she was wiping her sweat right now looked very silly.

When you try to frighten someone, the best way is to let them invoke fear in themselves. That way, without even moving a finger, you can scare them out of their minds.

Li XunHuan looked at Sun XiaoHong and almost couldn't hold in his laughter.

He suddenly realized that Sun XiaoHong was no longer a child. In every respect, she was now a mature woman.

Only a mature woman can deal with another mature woman.

Chapter 72: Human Nature is Neither Good nor Evil

Although neither of them had raised a single finger, Lin XianEr and Sun XiaoHong had already went through two exchanges.

This was a battle of wits, not a battle of brawn.

Lin XianEr had won the first exchange.

Because she understood the weaknesses of women and she knew how to take advantage of them as well.

In the second exchange, Sun XiaoHong was the victor.

She won because of the very same reason.

She knew that women are always suspicious, and suspicious of everything.

Because this suspicion exists, fear will come to be.

If Sun XiaoHong was a man, she would have just killed Lin XianEr.

If Lin XianEr was a man, despite anything that Sun XiaoHong said, she would have left a long time ago.

It is because the two of them are women that the situation

had come to where it was at now.

When men and women attempt to do the same thing, no matter what it is, their methods will always be different, and the results will always be different.

The same case applies to duels.

When women duel, it will never be as heavy, intense, or exciting as when men duel. But compared to men, their duels are far more subtle, complex, and interesting.

Because there are bound to be many surprises and variations.

The changes and variations in their duels are not like those in martial arts. In fact, compared to martial arts, they happen much faster and are much more complicated.

It is a pity that their variations cannot be seen by the naked eye.

If someone could actually see the subtle and complex variations in a women's mind, they would realize that duels among women are much more interesting than duels among men.

Women will be women, they will always be different than men.

Anyone who denies this is a fool.

The idea is not only logical but simple as well.

The strange thing is, there are still people in this world who don't comprehend this.

Sun XiaoHong pulled Li XunHuan ahead.

Lin XianEr followed them from behind.

"We're going our way, you go yours, why are you following us for?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"I ... I want to go see Ah Fei too." Lin XianEr said.

"What do you still want to see him for? You still haven't hurt him enough?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"I just want to ... " Lin XianEr said.

"We won't let you see him, it's pointless for you to come." Sun XiaoHong said.

"I'll look at him from afar, whether he is willing to see me or not is up to him." Lin XianEr said.

"The decision is yours, if you are really set on following us, there's nothing we can do. Except ... since you chose to follow us, just don't regret it later." Sun XiaoHong said coldly.

"I never regret anything I do." Lin XianEr said.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly laughed and said, "Look, didn't I tell you that she would follow us, my guesses were exactly correct."

This was directed at Li XunHuan.

"You wanted her to follow us all along." Li XunHuan said with a smile.

"Of course." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Why?" Li XunHuan said.

"I didn't have a way to deal with her before, all I can do is to wait for another chance. If she doesn't follow along with us, how will I have that chance?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"You didn't have to wait, you should have just attacked her before. No matter what she said you could've ignored her." Li XunHuan said.

"Men have a saying, 'A promise is worth thousands in gold', you think women can just break promises like they pass gas?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"But how did you know that she would follow us?" Li XunHuan said.

"Because she wants our protection. She knows that by following Li TanHua, no matter who it is that wants to kill her would have to think twice." Sun XiaoHong said.

Sun XiaoHong smiled and continued, "This is what they call, 'A fox pretending to be a tiger', or another way of saying it is 'dogs hiding behind humans'."

"None of those two phrases sound very pleasant." Li XunHuan said.

"If you chose to do something like this, no matter how bad it sounds, all you can do is listen." Sun XiaoHong said.

Obviously Lin XianEr heard everything they said.

Sun XiaoHong purposely let her hear them.

But Lin XianEr pretended to not have heard anything at all. She didn't say anything either.

It was as if she suddenly went deaf and dumb.

Pretending to be deaf and dumb is definitely not an easy thing to do.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly changed the subject and said, "Do you know about what happened between Long Xiao4Yun and ShangGuan JinHong?"

"I've heard about it ... you and your grandfather came because of that incident." Li XunHuan said.

"Right, because we knew that we would be able to see a lot of people there." Sun XiaoHong said.

She turned to look at Li XunHuan and said, "But most importantly, I knew that you would show up."

Li XunHuan looked back at her. He suddenly felt a warmth in his heart, like he had just drank a cup of wine.

He had never felt this way in a very long time.

Sun XiaoHong felt like she was in paradise knowing that Li XunHuan was staring back into her eyes.

After a while, Li XunHuan said, "If it weren't for you and your grandfather, I might've already ..."

She cut him off and said, "ShangGuan JinHong would've ended up inside that casket."

Li XunHuan let out a laugh and didn't continue on.

He knew that sooner or later he would have to face ShangGuan JinHong, but he didn't like to talk about it.

He didn't like to think about it too much, because if he did, he'd have worries, if he had worries, he'd be distracted, and his chances of winning would be very slim.

"When dealing with people like ShangGuan JinHong, there's no need to be concerned with honor. If you had attacked him when he saw ShangGuan Fei's corpse, then you definitely could have killed him." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Not definitely." Li XunHuan said.

"No? You don't think that he'd be distracted by seeing his own dead son?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Blood is thicker than water. ShangGuan JinHong definitely still has a shred of humanity in him." Li XunHuan said.

"Then why didn't you make a move? You should know that he won't necessarily repay your honor and fairness." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Him and I already can't coexist in this world, of course there's no need for honor between the two of us." Li XunHuan said.

"Then you ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan interrupted her with a laugh, "I didn't attack because I was still waiting for the right opportunity."

"I think that was the best opportunity that you could ever

want." Sun XiaoHong said.

"You're wrong." Li XunHuan said.

"Huh?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Even though seeing your own son dead can be a great distraction, you will still feel a surge of incredible sadness and anger. If I had attacked, he would have released all that anger and sadness on me!" Li XUnHuan said.

He sighed and continued, "When someone is in deep sadness, not only will their strength be greater than normal, their courage will be greater than normal as well. If ShangGuan JinHong would've struck at me then, I don't have confidence at all that I could have blocked his attack."

Sun XiaoHong smiled at him and said, "So you're not as honorable as I had thought. You can even be quite schemy."

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "If I really was as noble and honorable as everyone thinks, I would've died at least eighty times already."

"If ShangGuan JinHong knew of your intentions back then, he would've regretted drinking that cup of wine with you." Sun XiaoHong said.

"He would never regret it." Li XunHuan said.

"Why?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Because he understood my intentions perfectly well." Li XunHuan said.

"Then why did he still drink to you?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"He drank to me not because of honor or fairness, in his eyes honorable and just people are idiots." Li XunHuan said.

"Then what was his reason?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Because he understood my intentions, he knew that I wasn't an idiot." Li XunHuan said.

"He knew that you were like him, in that you could wait, wait for the right chance, and wait for the perfect opportune moment. That's why he drank to you?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Yes." Li XunHuan said.

"He felt that you two were the same kind of people, so he admired you. We admire most the people who resemble ourselves, because deep down inside, we admire ourselves the most." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Very well said. I'm amazed that you can understand something like this at your age." Li XunHuan said.

"But are you and him really the same kind of person?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"In certain ways, yes we are. Its because we grew up in different environments, and we encountered different people and events, that we ended up as two different people." Li XunHuan said.

He sighed and continued, "Some people say that human nature is good, others say that human nature is evil. I say that we aren't born good nor evil. Who we are and whether we are good or evil depends only on what we do in our lives."

"It looks like you not only understand others very well, you understand yourself very well also." Sun XiaoHong said.

"To fully understand oneself is not an easy thing to do at all." Li XunHuan said.

His expression turned slightly gloomy and a glimmer of pain and sadness filled his eyes.

Sun XiaoHong sighed and said, "If someone wants to truly understand themselves, they must first go through a lot of sadness and suffering, don't they?"

"That is correct." Li XunHuan said.

"If that is the case, then I don't ever want to understand myself. The more I understand myself, the more pain I'd have to go through. If I didn't understand myself at all, then I'd be the happiest." Sun XiaoHong said.

This time Li XunHuan was the one who changed the subject.

"When ShangGuan JinHong toasted to me, you and your grandfather were still around?" Li XunHuan asked.

"No we had already left. I heard about it from other people." Sun XiaoHong said.

She smiled and continued, "You and ShangGuan JinHong are incredibly famous people now. Your every move and action is considered big news. In this city alone, I bet there are about a hundred thousand people discussing you right now, would you believe me?"

"This is why I admire your grandfather. His actions are like

drifting clouds and his thoughts are like flowing water. He is free to do whatever he wishes and never has any worries to burden him. This type of person is truly incredible." Li XunHuan said.

"He really can see past everything." Sun XiaoHong said.

She changed the subject again and asked, "Do you know who sent that casket?"

"I can't really guess who it is." Li XunHuan said.

"Do you think it was the same person who killed ShangGuan Fei?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

She was aware of who had killed ShangGuan Fei.

But Lin XianEr had no idea who this person was. She kept quiet the entire time but was attentively listening to their conversation, hoping that one of them would say the killer's name.

"It is probably the same person, because only a few people knew where ShangGuan Fei's corpse was buried." Li XunHuan said.

"Why do you think that person did this for ... ?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Because that person wants to scare ShangGuan JinHong." Li XunHuan said.

"That person hates ShangGuan JinHong too?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan fell silent for a while, then said, "It's possible

that the person doesn't hate ShangGuan JinHong. The person probably only did so to come to ShangGuan JinHong's aid after he has fallen."

"I don't understand, if the person wants to help ShangGuan JinHong, why scare him in the first place?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Or it could be that the person wants ShangGuan JinHong to regret his decision." Li XunHuan said.

Sun XiaoHong sighed and said, "People's motivations are harder to comprehend than anything else in this world."

"Right. People's minds and human nature are the two most complicated things in this world, much more complicated than even the most powerful martial arts." Li XunHuan said.

He suddenly added, "But if you don't understand human nature, you can never reach the pinnacle of martial arts. Because everything is related to human nature in one way or another, even martial arts."

These wise words were far too deep for Sun XiaoHong to really grasp.

It wasn't clear whether she understood much of what he said, but she was quiet for some time, before finally saying, "I don't care if I can't understand anything at all, I only want to understand you."

Her eyes were stuck on him. In her eyes were not only the looks of appreciation but also trust and faith, as if trying to tell him that he was the only person she could ever open her heart to.

Li XunHuan suddenly felt his heart swell up with warmth again. He couldn't resist reaching out to caress her adorable face.

But of course he didn't do such a thing.

He just couldn't.

He slowly turned his head away, and started coughing lightly.

Sun XiaoHong was staring at him, waiting for a reply, but slowly seemed to lose the look of hope in her eyes. She said, "But it seems like you're scared of letting anyone understand you, so you're constantly trying to prevent it from happening."

"Scared? Scared of what?" Li XunHuan said.

"Scared of having someone else fall in love with you." Sun XiaoHong said. "Because anyone who truly understood you would not be able to help but fall in love with you. You would rather someone hate you than fall in love with you, isn't that right?"

"The times have really changed. Young girls back then would never say the word 'love'." Li XunHuan said with a laugh.

"And perhaps young girls now don't either. But I don't care what time period I was born into, whether its several hundred years ago or whatever. If I feel something in my heart, I won't restrain myself from saying it with my mouth." Sun XiaoHong said.

No matter what time period, there will always be people just like her.

These people aren't afraid to speak, to act, to love, and to hate.

Maybe because they are ahead of their time that everyone else thinks of them as a little bit crazy and a little bit strange.

But they would never be bothered by it at all. No matter what anyone thinks of them, they would never take it to heart.

It is a foggy night.

Although it is still Winter, the foggy mist makes it look like Spring.

Sun XiaoHong hoped that this foggy path would never end.

Li XunHuan was originally very anxious to see Ah Fei, but now it didn't seem as urgent.

These couple of years his mood had become very heavy, as if there were invisible shackles locking down on him, such that he couldn't even breathe.

It was only the several days that he was with Sun XiaoHong that he felt at ease.

He began to realize that she really understood him, much more than he could ever imagine.

To be able to spend time with someone who truly understands you, these are definitely the times in our lives that we treasure the most.

But Li XunHuan already wanted to run away.

"You would rather someone hate you than fall in love with you, isn't that right?"

Li XunHuan's heart started to ache.

It wasn't that he would rather not, it was that he simply could not.

Everyone has their own emotional barriers. No one can help them get over it except themselves.

Such is the case for Li XunHuan. And such is the case for Ah Fei.

Will those emotional barriers stay up forever? Will they carry those painful memories forever even into the grave?

Sun XiaoHong suddenly stopped wailing and said, "We are here."

The road led to the middle of nowhere. There was a small hut at the side of the road. Lantern light shown through a small window from the inside.

The light that shown through was exceptionally brilliant. Such a small house normally would never have such bright lanterns.

Sun XiaoHong turned to Lin XianEr and said, "You recognize this place, right?"

Of course she recognized this house, this was her and Ah Fei's 'home'.

She bit her lip, nodded her head, and walked timidly down the road.

"Ah Fei has returned here?" Lin XianEr said.

"Do you still want to go inside and see him?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Can ... can I go in?" Lin XianEr said.

"This was your house, if you wanted to go in, you don't need to ask anyone." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin XianEr lowered her head and said, "But now ..."

"But now of course its not the same. You should know yourself whose fault it is that things are as they are now." Sun XiaoHong smiled coldly and continued, "You could have lived a peaceful and happy life here, but you weren't willing. This home wasn't good enough for you, and that person wasn't good enough for you."

Lin XianEr hung her head and said, "I know now that I was wrong. The only reason I was able to survive was because he protected me for so long. If it weren't for him I would've been killed long ago."

"Do you think he will still protect you like before?" Sun XiaoHong said coldly.

Lin XianEr started tearing, and said, "I don't know, I wouldn't blame him ..."

She raised her head and said boldly, "I only want to see him and say two things and then I'll leave. This isn't too much too ask, can you two promise me this?"

"It's not that I don't want to promise you, its just that your words are very hard to trust." Sun XiaoHong said.

"If I don't leave after my two sentences, you can chase me away." Lin XianEr said.

Sun XiaoHong fell silent, then looked At Li XunHuan.

Li XunHuan had been standing quietly the whole time, with not a single expression on his face.

But his mind was in total disarray.

His biggest weakness was that he was always too forgiving. Although sometimes he is certain that he shouldn't give in, he can't help but feel sympathetic inside.

A lot of people know of this weakness. And a lot of people take advantage of him because of this weakness.

He even knows this himself, but for some reason he can't change.

Even if someone wrongs him ten thousand times, he is still unwilling to do even one wrong thing back. Sometimes he even knows that a person is deceiving him, yet he still lets himself be deceived.

Because he believes that if just once, someone is truthful to him, then his sacrifice will be worth it.

Li XunHuan is that kind of a person. You can call him a true gentleman, or you can call him an idiot. At the very least you have to admit that he is one of a kind.

At the very least, you should realize that he never has had any regrets.

He rarely causes people to sweat, and rarely causes people to bleed. He would rather the sweat and blood be his own.

But the things he does always causes people to shed tears.

They are tears of admiration and tears of gratitude.

Sun XiaoHong sighed on the inside.

She knew that he couldn't bear to turn her down. He has probably never turned down anyone before in his life.

"This is the last time I'll ever see him. If he finds out that you two won't even let me see him one last time, he'll hate you for the rest of his life." Lin XianEr said.

Sun XiaoHong bit down on her lips and said, "You're only going to say two sentences to him? Once you're done you'll leave immediately?"

"Would I really overstay my welcome? Would I really want you two to chase me out? Please just promise me this and I can die without any regrets." Lin XianEr said with a smile.

Li XunHuan suddenly sighed and said, "Just let her in, two sentences can't harm him."

Chapter 73: Cage and Shackles

It was very hot inside the house, unusually hot. Four pots of fire were burning furiously.

The raging flames lit up the walls and the ceilings into a bright red.

Ah Fei's face was red as well. His whole body was red.

He was in between the four pots of fire. He was bare chested and wore only a pair of worn trousers.

His trousers were drenched with water.

He was sweating profusely and breathing heavily.

His entire body looked exhausted and on the verge of collapse.

A white-haired old man sat in one corner of the house puffing on his pipe.

Streams of smoke puffed out from his nose as he filled that corner of the house with a hazy fog.

He was indeed a peculiar person.

No one knew from where he came, and no one knew to

where he would go.

In fact, nobody knows who he is exactly. Perhaps he is just a poor old story teller.

Or perhaps, he really is the incomparable 'Sage of Heaven'!

But no matter what, he is definitely the first thing that will catch your eye when you step foot into this house.

Ah Fei's eyes were shut and he didn't notice the people that had entered.

Sun XiaoHong looked shocked and exclaimed, "Grandpa, what are you doing?"

Mr. Sun's eyes were still closed. He puffed on his pipe and a cloud of smoke came from his mouth.

"I am steaming him." Mr. Sun replied.

Sun XiaoHong's eyes opened wide and asked, "Steaming him? He isn't a bun or a crab, why are you steaming him for?"

Ah Fei really looked like a crab that was being steamed alive.

Mr. Sun smiled and said, "I'm steaming him because I'm trying to force the alcohol to evaporate from his body so that he can sober up."

His eyes shifted to Li XunHuan as he continued, "I'm also trying to force the courage up from his blood so that he can become a whole new man again."

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "If that's the case, I think I have to take a turn at being steamed as well. But I'm afraid that if all the alcohol is steamed out of my body, I'll end up as an empty shell."

"So besides wine, there's nothing else in that body of yours?" Mr. Sun said.

Li XunHuan let out a sigh and said, "Perhaps, also a belly full of inopportunity."

Mr. Sun laughed and said, "Well said! If that belly wasn't full of knowledge, how would such insightful words come out of your mouth."

He suddenly stopped laughing and said, "Actually I've always wanted to steam you. I want to see what else is in that body of yours besides wine and knowledge. I want to know what Old Man Heaven used to create a person like you."

"And then what?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"And afterwards I want to gather up the entire world and stuff their stomachs full of whatever I find in there." Mr. Sun said.

"So they'll all be a bit like him?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Not just a bit, the more the better." Mr. Sun said.

"Then won't everyone in the world will be exactly like him." Sun XiaoHong said.

"And what's wrong with everyone in the world becoming exactly like him?" Mr. Sun said.

"There would be something wrong." Sun XiaoHong said.

"And what's that?" Mr. Sun said.

Sun XiaoHong lowered her head and fell silent.

This grandfather and granddaughter pair always spoke in a back and forth manner. One would ask, and the other would answer. Any other person would find it impossible to interrupt them.

It was only now that Li XunHuan had an opportunity to speak.

"Elder if you are suggesting that the entire world become exactly like me, I'm afraid that there's only one type of person who would agree." Li XunHuan said.

"What type is that?" Mr. Sun said.

"Wine vendors." Li XunHuan replied.

Mr. Sun smiled and said, "The way I see it, there's only one type of person who wouldn't agree to this."

"Who?" Sun XiaoHong said.

But as soon as that word left her mouth she wanted to take it back.

She already knew what her grandfather was going to say.

Her grandfather smiled at her and said, "You."

Sun XiaoHong's face blushed red as she lowered her head

and said, "Why ... why wouldn't I agree?"

"If everyone in the world was exactly like him, then you wouldn't know which one you would want." Mr. Sun said with a smile.

Sun XiaoHong immediately turned around, trying to hide her face which was as red as fire.

Was her heart also on fire?

The spring flame of a young maiden. Mr. Sun let out a hearty laugh and began taking another puff from his pipe.

He didn't seem to notice Lin XianEr in the room at all. Perhaps he was ignoring her because he didn't even glance at her once. He also didn't notice that his pipe had went out.

The house suddenly fell silent. The only sound that could be heard was the crackling of the burning embers from the fire.

Lin XianEr walked over in front of Ah Fei.

Other than Ah Fei, she didn't look at anyone else.

The raging fire reflected on her. Her face was half white and half red. When it was red she looked like a mischievous angel. When it glowed white she looked like a lonely ghost.

People have two faces as well. At times we are beautiful and at times we are repulsive.

Except in her case, she always remained beautiful.

If she was an angel, she would undoubtedly be the prettiest angel in all the heavens. If she was a lonely spirit, she would

definitely be the most beautiful ghost in the underworld.

But Ah Fei had seemingly made up his mind. No matter who she was, he would never look at her again.

Lin XianEr let out a sigh and said, "I came all the way here because I wanted to tell you two things. Whether you want to listen is up to you."

Ah Fei didn't seem like he was listening at all.

But why did it look like his entire body had frozen solid?

"That day, I know I hurt you a lot, but there's nothing else that I could've done. I didn't want to see you die in ShangGuan JinHong's hands. It was the only way I that I could've convinced ShangGuan JinHong to spare your life." Lin XianEr said.

Ah Fei still didn't look like he was listening.

But why were his fists clenched?

"I came here today not to beg of you to understand or to beg of you to forgive me. I already know that we're through ..."

Lin XianEr said.

She let out a long sigh before continuing, "I'm telling you this because I want your heart to feel at ease. All along I've wanted nothing more than for you to live on happily. But as for me ..."

"You've said enough." Sun XiaoHong interrupted.

Lin XianEr smiled bitterly and said, "You're right. I've said too much."

She really didn't say another word. Lin XianEr turned around and started to walk out.

She didn't walk fast but she didn't turn around either.

Ah Fei was still silent, his eyes still shut tightly.

Lin XianEr's eyes had turned towards the door.

Li XunHuan held his breath.

He knew that if Lin XianEr really did walk out that door, Ah Fei would never see her again.

As long as Ah Fei never saw her again, he could start over.

Lin XianEr understood very well herself that if she walked out of that door, she'd be walking out of the world.

Her steps didn't slow down, but there was a slight hint of fear in her eyes. While it was as bright as day inside the house, it was a pitch black night outside of the door.

Although the stars still shined brightly, she never bothered to look up at the night sky.

She only adored the dizzying brightness of this material world.

She adored praise, flattery, and applause. She enjoyed extravagance, excess, and luxury. She loved to be loved and she loved to be hated.

She lived for these things only.

Without these things, even if she did live on, it would be like a living grave.

The darkness was drawing closer and closer.

That look of fear in her eyes had slowly turned into resentment and hatred.

At that moment, she wanted to kill every single person alive.

But at that moment, Ah Fei suddenly stood up and said loudly, "Wait one second."

"Wait one second!"

Who knew that these three simple words could change many a life?

At that moment, Lin XianEr completely changed as well.

Her eyes filled with charm, confidence, and pride. She suddenly changed back into an incredible beauty.

In fact, she had never been so beautiful before in her life.

Pride and confidence is a woman's best makeup.

A woman without pride and confidence, no matter how beautiful she is, still will not have that magnetic attractiveness to them.

This is analogous to how women will always assume that as long as a man is successful then he will be attractive.

Success is a man's best makeup.

Lin XianEr stopped, she didn't turn her head but sighed lightly.

Her sigh was extremely low, but it carried an extremely sad and distressful tone.

One would never expect such a bittersweet sigh to come from her mouth, especially considering how magnificently beautiful she appeared right now.

Li XunHuan's heart sunk.

He knew that there was no music or sound in this world that was more effective than her sad helpless sigh in touching a man's heart. Not the sound of crumpling autumn leaves nor the sound of flowing rivers; not the desolate lyre under the bright moon nor the midnight flute singing to the wind was a match for her desperate whimper.

He hoped that Ah Fei would look at him for a moment and hear him out.

But Ah Fei's eyes were set on Lin XianEr, and his ears could only hear her voice.

"I've finished saying what I had to say. I can't stay any longer." Lin XianEr said.

"Why not?" Ah Fei said.

"Because I made a promise that I would only say two sentences and then would leave immediately." Lin XianEr said.

"You want to leave?" Ah Fei said.

"Even if I didn't want to leave, someone will chase me out."
Lin XianEr said.

"Who? Who would chase you out?" Ah Fei said.

His eyes suddenly lit up with strength as he proclaimed loudly, "Why are you letting anyone chase you out, this is your home."

Lin XianEr turned around and looked straight at Ah Fei.

There already were tears in her eyes, those eyes that were as soft and delicate as droplets of water.

After a long while, she sighed again and said, "Is this still my home?"

"Of course. As long as you are willing, this will be your home." Ah Fei said.

Lin XianEr's feet started to move again. She seemed as if she was about to throw herself into Ah Fei's embrace, but suddenly stopped and said, "Of course I am willing, but I'm afraid others aren't."

Ah Fei gritted his teeth and said, "Whoever objects can leave."

He seemed like he was avoiding Li XunHuan's eyes and didn't care what anyone thought.

Mr. Sun really did succeed in getting his blood to boil, forcing his courage back up. Not only that but he also steamed all the emotions in his heart right to the surface.

When a person's body is at its weakest, emotions are at their

most abundant.

His eyes never left Lin XianEr as he said, "In this house, no one can chase you out, only you can chase others out."

"I really want to be together with you, but, they are your friends too ..." Lin XianEr said with a smile as tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Anyone who is unwilling to be your friend is no friend of mine." Ah Fei said.

She threw her arms around Ah Fei and said, "Hearing you say that, I am satisfied. I don't mind what anyone thinks about me, I won't mind how anyone treats me, I won't let any of that bother me."

The door was still open.

Li XunHuan slowly walked towards the door and out into the darkness of the night.

Sun XiaoHong followed him out. She bit her lips and said, "Are we going to leave just like that?"

Li XunHuan didn't say a word. No words would come out.

She staggered along angrily and said, "I can't believe that he is that kind of a person! He would actually still treat her that well ... he is totally ungrateful! He cares only for love and betrays his friends!"

Li XunHuan let out a long sigh and said, "You've misjudged him."

"How so? You're saying he really isn't that type of person?"

Sun XiaoHong said.

"He isn't." Li XunHuan said.

"If he isn't then why would he do what he just did?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan's voice dropped, "Because ... because ..."

He just didn't know how to say it so Mr. Sun continued for him.

"He did that because he just can't control himself right now." Mr. Sun said with a sigh.

"Why can't he control himself? Its not like someone is forcing him under knife-point. No one is tying him down." Sun XiaoHong said.

"You're correct that no one is forcing him, but he is shackling himself up." Mr. Sun said.

Mr. Sun sighed as he continued, "In fact, everyone in this world has their own shackles and cage."

"Well I don't." Sun XiaoHong said.

"You think you don't because you're still a child and you don't understand it yet." Mr. Sun said.

Sun XiaoHong's voice rose, "Even if I am a child, fine! Then what about him?"

She was pointing at Li XunHuan, and continued, "He's not a child, yet he doesn't have any shackles or a cage either."

"Of course he does." Mr. Sun said.

She looked over at Li XunHuan and asked, "Do you?"

Li XunHuan smiled and replied, "I admit that I do."

"He never takes anything to heart. Even if people insult him or wrong him, he would never be upset by it. Such that people would start to think that he reacts that way because his courage has disappeared." Mr. Sun said.

Li XunHuan smiled.

"But once he finds out that his friends are in danger, he will abandon all else in order to save them. Whether its enduring boiling water or walking through fire, or having blades pierced through his chest, he would do it all in an instant ..." Mr. Sun said.

He sighed and continued, "Because 'friendship' is his cage. Only this type of cage can steam his vivacity to the surface! Only this type of cage can have his blood bubbling with courage!"

"Then what about a person like Long Xiao4Yun, does he have a cage as well?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Of course." Mr. Sun said.

"And what is his cage?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Wealth and power!" Mr. Sun said.

"But the reason he wants to kill Li XunHuan can't be for wealth and power. He knows that Li XunHuan is not the type of person who would fight over wealth and power with him."

Sun XiaoHong said.

"The only reason he wants to kill Li XunHuan is because his heart has shackles." Mr. Sun said.

"What shackles?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

Mr. Sun looked over at Li XunHuan and then stopped talking.

The expression on Li XunHuan's face was gloomier than the night itself.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly realized the answer.

Long Xiao4Yun despises Li XunHuan because he is suspicious, and envious.

He is suspecting that Li XunHuan will avenge all that he has ever done to him.

And he is envious of Li XunHuan's honor and generosity, because he can never be like that.

Suspicion and envy are his shackles.

Most people in this world have these shackles as well.

What are Ah Fei's shackles?

Mr. Sun looked up into the bright night sky and sighed, "Ah Fei's shackles are completely different from Long Xiao4Yun's. Ah Fei is chained down by love."

"Love can be considered shackles as well?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Of course, in fact they are much heavier than any other kind." Mr. Sun said.

"But does he really love Lin XianEr? It seems like he only loves her because he cannot have her." Sun XiaoHong said.

No one replied.

Because no one can truly answer her question.

She sighed and looked at Li XunHuan and said, "He is your friend. You better figure out a way to help free him of his shackles."

Li XunHuan slowly turned to look back ...

The light from the window in the house had gone out. The lonely hut sat in the western winds under the dark night. It seemed to resemble the type of person that Ah Fei was: stubborn yet resilient, but lonesome.

Li XunHuan bent over and started coughing again.

He knew that no one could help free Ah Fei from his shackles.

The only person who could free him was himself.

Chapter 74: The Most Generous Person

The lights are out.

A different type of flame is being ignited inside the house.

A long, slender pair of legs hung down from the side of the bed, accentuated beautifully by the pale moonlight.

Her legs bent as his body shivered.

Ah Fei was as tense as an outstretched bow.

The arrow was set on the bow, as it sought out its quiver.

An experienced person knows that that intense sense of urgency is most difficult to endure.

Lin XianEr was, of course, an experienced person.

She kept slipping out reach and pushing him away, silently whimpering, "Wait ... wait ..."

Ah Fei didn't respond with words, but with action.

He couldn't wait any longer.

She bit down on her lips and stared into his bulging red eyes.

"How ... how come you've never asked me before?"

"Ask you what?"

"Whether ShangGuan JinHong and I had ..."

Ah Fei's movements suddenly stopped, as if someone had just kicked him down.

"Is it because it doesn't bother you anymore?"

Ah Fei began to sweat, sweat that signaled a person's weakness.

Lin XianEr had begun to notice that weakness.

"I know that it bothers you, because I know that you love me."

She sounded sad and distressed, but her eyes carried a sadistic glee. She was like a cat who had a mouse under her paws. She was like ShangGuan JinHong looking down at her when she was in the same situation.

"Did you or didn't you?" Ah Fei asked in a coarse voice.

She sighed and answered, "A poor mouse in the grasp of a vicious cat, you don't have to ask to know the outcome."

Ah Fei suddenly fell over, so full of anger that he couldn't move a muscle.

Lin XianEr looked down over his face, like her tears were about to drop.

"I knew it would make you angry, but I couldn't keep it from you. I had wanted to give myself to you pure and chaste, but ..."

She crawled up into Ah Fei's chest with tears in her eyes and said, "Now I regret waiting for so long, although it was all for you, now I ..."

Ah Fei suddenly cried out, "I know it was for my sake, that is why I promise I will return your chastity to you."

"But this is something that can't ever be recovered!" Lin XianEr said.

"It can, I have a way." Ah Fei said.

He clenched his hands and said menacingly, "As long as I kill ShangGuan JinHong, as long as I kill the person who has defiled you, then you will be pure once again ..."

His voice suddenly stopped because he heard a cold shrill laugh coming from the window.

"If that's the case, then you better be ready to kill a whole lot of people!"

Another voice chimed in, "That b-i-t-c-h's body has never been clean before! With the exception of you, every man who's ever laid eyes on her has slept with her!"

A third voice added, "If you really wanted to kill every single person who's been with her before, even if you killed eighty a day until the day you're old, you'd still be far from done!"

The house had three windows, and there was a person outside each of them.

The three voices were different, but there was an eerie similarity between them.

Shrill and forged, anyone who heard them would want to throw up.

Ah Fei bolted up and covered Lin XianEr with a blanket. He kicked a pillow that knocked over a candle that was on the table. In a sharp voice he asked, "Who's there?"

He had wanted to rush out but once he got up he decided to stay by Lin XianEr's side instead.

The three people outside the windows burst out in laughter.

"Don't tell me you're afraid that one of us will see her naked body!"

"She's used to people staring at her body! In fact, she feels uncomfortable when people aren't staring at her!"

PENG, all three windows were forced open.

Three beams of light poured into the room directly at Lin XianEr.

They were Kongming lanterns.

You could only see their brightness, you couldn't see from where they came, or who was holding them.

They were so bright that you could barely keep your eyes open.

Lin XianEr shielded her eyes with her hands. The cotton

blanket covering her body slowly slid off revealing her legs, and then her thighs ...

She never bothered to pull the blanket up. She really wasn't afraid of being seen.

Ah Fei gritted his teeth, pulled off his clothes, passed them to Lin XianEr and said, "Put these on."

Lin XianEr rolled her eyes and snickered, "Why? Are you ashamed of how I look?"

Even though she was entirely nude she could still smile that frivolously.

She had used her two deadliest weapons.

Ah Fei broke a chair on the floor, grabbed its legs, and said, "Whoever steps one foot inside this house will die!"

The three voices could be heard laughing again, but this time they were coming from outside the door.

"He still wants to take people's lives."

"In his current condition he can forget about killing anyone."

"He can still take one person's life ... his own!"

With another *PENG*, the thick wooden door was shattered instantly.

Shards of wood were sent flying, three people slowly walked in.

Three people clothed in yellow.

Three people with bamboo hats strapped tightly to their heads covering their faces.

This was the distinguishing appearance of members of the 'Gold Currency Union'.

The first one had a golden chain wrapped around his hands, the chain whip had two parts connected by a large iron hammer.

The second and third used sabre and sword.

A demon-headed sabre and a funeral-gate sword.

Their three weapons were at ready, as if in fear of missing the opportunity to kill.

Ah Fei suddenly stood still. He was like a starved wolf that had just smelled fresh meat.

Although his reactions had slowed and his strength had lowered, his natural instincts had not diminished.

He had already drawn the scent of blood.

Lin XianEr was giggling even more as she said, "So it is the famous 'Twin Meteors of Wind and Rain' Branch-Master Xiang Song. I am honored, I am honored."

The twin meteor hammer in his hands lightly swung back and forth, he looked as steady and formidable as a mountain.

"Has Branch-Master Xiang come under the orders of ShangGuan JinHong to kill me today?" Lin XianEr said.

"You've guessed correctly." Xiang Song replied.

Lin XianEr sighed and said, "I can't believe ShangGUan JinHong wants to take my life this urgently."

"People who have run out of their usefulness have to die." Xiang Song replied.

"You're wrong. He doesn't to kill me for that reason." Lin XianEr replied.

"Hmm?" Xiang Song replied.

"He wants me dead because he is afraid that I will find another man and stain his reputation." Lin XianEr said.

"Chief ShangGuan's orders never required explanantion, they only need to be carried out." Xiang Song replied coldly.

Lin XianEr glanced over at Ah Fei for a second and said, "You three just barged in here to kill me, because you assume that he isn't capable of protecting me anymore."

"He can try." Xiang Song said.

"There's no need for him to try." the one wielding the sabre laughed coldly.

"Hmm?" Lin XianEr said.

"Since you can admit that in front of him, then you know yourself that he isn't capable of protecting you. Since we all know this now, what's the point in him trying?"

Lin XianEr laughed and said, "You're right, he can barely

protect himself right now. I'm just making it harder for him, except ..."

She slowly stood up, her bare body fully exposed to the light, and continued, "Do you think that I can't protect myself either anymore?"

Her breasts stood haughtily, her legs fully straight.

Under the lantern light, her skin looked like milky white satin.

Her body was definitely worth being proud of.

Ah Fei's face was twisting with pain, his cold sweat, almost the size of peas, slowly dripped down.

Lin XianEr's hands slowly crept along her own body, as she said in a sultry voice, "Wouldn't it be a pity if you three were to kill me?"

Xiang Song sighed and said, "There are women who use their bodies in order to pay for certain things. When they're looking at perfumes, or when they're trying on exquisite dresses, they'll never be shy about it. But you're entirely different."

"Of course I'm different." Lin XianEr said.

"You're even much more generous than they are. You use your body to pay for even the smallest things. As long as you're in a good mood you'd even satisfy a lowly servant who opened the door for you." Xiang Song said.

"Do you want to ask me for a fee as well?" Lin XianEr said.

She slowly walked over to him, "Come and collect, because if I decided to pay a small fee to you, no one would argue that it'd be too much."

Xiang Song stood as still as a tree.

Lin XianEr walked over in front of him and wanted to nibble on his neck.

Xiang Song suddenly attacked, his hammer struck her chest.

Lin XianEr was sent flying, her body flipped over onto the bed!

The bamboo hat fell from Xiang Song's head and revealed his face.

A pale white face, full of wrinkles, but without a single trace of facial hair.

Lin XianEr suddenly started laughing and said, "No wonder ShangGuan JinHong sent you here to kill me, you're neither male nor female! You're a half-man, half-woman freak!"

Xiang Song stared at her coldly, not a single hint of expression on his face. After a long while, he turned to Ah Fei and said, "It's best for you to leave."

"Leave?" Ah Fei said.

"Don't tell me you still want to protect this b-i-t-c-h." Xiang Song said.

Ah Fei slowly lowered his hands.

"So you should leave, its best that you're not by her side

when I kill her." Xiang Song said.

"Why?" Ah Fei said.

"Because I'm afraid you'd throw up." Xiang Song said ferociously.

Ah Fei fell silent, then lowered his head as well.

Lin XianEr stopped laughing as well. At this point, not even her laughter would come out.

It was then that Ah Fei struck out!

Ah Fei's instincts were still sharp.

He really did pick the best opportunity to attack.

Unfortunately his reactions had slowed, and his strength had diminished.

A golden flash of light, twin meteors shot out.

Shards of wood were sent flying, the legs of the chair in Ah Fei's hands had been shattered.

"My order was to kill her, not you. You're still alive because I don't like getting too involved." Xiang Song said coldly.

Ah Fei clenched tightly onto the two wooden stubs in his hands, like a dying person grasping onto one last glimpse of hope.

But what kind of hope was this?

He used to be a slayer of men.

But now, he couldn't kill anybody. To others, he wasn't even worth killing.

This showed that he was practically useless in their eyes. Whether he was alive or dead made no difference.

"It is very difficult for a person to crawl back up, but very easy for a person to fall down."

Ah Fei suddenly remembered when he had went to save Li XunHuan, when he first crossed swords with Jing WuMing ...

At that time no one dared to take him lightly.

But what about now?

That happened only several days ago, yet it seemed like such a far and distant memory.

Xiang Song's voice sounded far and distant now as well.

"You can stay here and watch if you prefer. I'll show you how a real slayer kills people."

Suddenly another voice slowly penetrated the room, "And you're supposed to be adept at killing? I'm afraid you're not worthy."

Chapter 75: Between Life and Death

That slow monotonous voice sounded neither high or low and completely void of emotion. Xiang Song was familiar with this voice, the only person who sounded like this was Jing WuMing!

Jing WuMing!

Xiang Song was terrified as he slowly turned his head ... it really was Jing WuMing!

His clothes were worn out and he looked tired and weary, but his eyes ...

Those deathly pale eyes were as chillingly cold as ever. They could cause a person's blood to freeze over.

Xiang Song looked away from his eyes and towards his hands.

His left hand was suspended by cloth. Its color was as pale as ash as if it was a hand that had reached out from the grave.

This used to be a hand that could kill, but now it was a hand that could only cause people to vomit.

Xiang Song laughed casually and said, "Although I might

not understand how to kill people, at least I can still kill. Mr. Jing may understand fully how to kill people but unfortunately killing isn't done with the mouth but with the hands."

Jing WuMing's pupils contracted. He stared at Xiang Song and said slowly, "You can't see my hand?"

"There are many kinds of hands. What I see is not the kind of hand that can kill." Xiang Song said.

"You don't think my right hand can kill?" Jing WuMing said.

"There are many kinds of people as well. Some are easy to kill while others are not." Xiang Song said.

"Which kind are you?" Jing WuMing said.

Xiang Song lowered his head and said coldly, "The kind that you can't kill."

His eyes filled with hatred as if he was trying to lure Jing WuMing into attacking. As if he was looking for a reason to kill him.

Jing WuMing suddenly broke out in laughter.

He was the same as ShangGuan JinHong, he looked much more formidable and frightening when he was laughing than when he wasn't.

Xiang Song unknowingly took a single step back.

"So you've always hated me?" Jing WuMing said.

Xiang Song gritted his teeth and said, "I'm afraid there

aren't many people in this world who don't hate you."

"You want to kill me?" Jing WuMing said.

"I'm not the only one either." Xiang Song replied.

"But did you wait until now?" Jing WuMing said.

"You have to wait for the right opportunity to kill, you should understand this better than anyone." Xiang Song said.

"You think that your opportunity has come now?" Jing WuMing said.

"Correct." Xiang Song said.

Jing WuMing sighed as he said, "It's a pity that I have a secret that you aren't aware of."

"What secret?" Xiang Song couldn't help but ask.

Jing WuMing's morbid eyes stared directly at his throat as he slowly spoke.

"My right hand can kill as well. In fact, compared to my left hand it kills even faster!"

As soon as his last word came out, his sword had already pierced through Xiang Song's throat!

No one saw where his sword had come from, and no one saw how his sword had pierced into Xiang Song's throat.

The only thing anyone saw a flash of light and a spray of blood. With a *GE* Xiang Song's breath had stopped. His eyes looked like they were hanging out from their sockets.

'Demon-Head Sabre' and 'Funeral-Gate Sword' looked like their eyes were about to drop from their sockets as well.

The two of them slowly retreated backwards towards the door.

Jing WuMing didn't turn his head and coldly said, "You two still think that you can leave after you've seen my secret?"

Another cold flash of light!

Blood splashed across the floor. Under the lantern light it looked like a strand of glistening red pearls.

Potent medicines taste bitter while venemous poisons are always irresistably sweet.

Some things in life are just that peculiar ... even the most repulsive, disgusting things, if looked at in a certain way can appear to be priceless and beautiful.

That is why the sword that kills always appears particularly bright and the blood that is spilled appears particularly radiant.

That is why there is a saying that, "Beauty, fades within the blink of an eye. Only true skill lasts forever."

'True skill' is never beautiful.

The sword that kills people is also the same as the knife that cuts vegetables, both are nothing but steel. The question is whether you look deep enough or not.

But there are others who say, "Let me grasp only that single

moment of beauty. Let those things that last forever lie in wait forever, they are of no use to me."

In those moments right before, Xiang Song was still the heralded 'Twin Meteors of Wind and Rain', Branch-Leader of the Eighth Branch of the Golden Currency Union.

But now, he was just another dead person, not much different from any other dead person.

Jing WuMing looked down at his corpse. The expression on his face changed rather strangely, as if this was the first time that he had ever seen a dead person.

Was it because this was the first time that he felt 'death'?

Was it because that only when a person was truly desolate that he could feel 'death'?

Lin XianEr let out a long sigh.

She had been holding it in for quite some time but was finally able to exhale.

She smiled at Jing WuMing and said, "I can't believe that you would come to save me."

Jing WuMing didn't raise his head and coldly replied, "You think I came here to save you?"

She nodded her head and said, "I know your intentions."

Jing WuMing slowly lifted his head and said, "What do you know?"

"You saved me because ShangGuan JinHong wanted to kill

me." Lin XianEr said.

Jing WuMing stared at her.

"You despise him. So anything that he plans to do, you'll try to ruin." Lin XianEr said.

Jing WuMing still stared at her.

"Even until now, I had always understood what kind of person you are, and I also know that ShangGuan Fei died under your hands." Lin XianEr said.

Jing WuMing's eyes suddenly shifted to his sword.

"You know too much." he said.

Lin XianEr laughed and said, "I know that you won't kill me either. Because if you did, that would be exactly what ShangGuan JinHong wanted."

She smiled sweetly and continued, "Not only will you let me live, you'll take me along with you as well, correct?"

"Take you with me?" Jing WuMing said.

"Because if you don't want me to die under ShangGuan JinHong's hands, and you don't want me to leak out your secret, you have no choice but to take me with you." Lin XianEr said.

Her voice became gentle and alluring, "I'm whole-heartedly willing to go with you, wherever you will go I'll follow."

Jing WuMing fell silent for a while, and then glanced at Ah Fei.

It was like he had just realized that Ah Fei was there.

Even Ah Fei had forgotten that he was there himself.

Lin XianEr glanced at him as well. She walked over and kissed him on his cheeks.

She didn't say another word.

She didn't have to say anything else.

Lin XianEr finally followed Jing WuMing out.

Ah Fei didn't move.

His mouth dried up.

Ah Fei didn't move.

Light poured in from the windows, it was already morning.

Ah Fei still hadn't moved.

He laid on the floor soaked in blood next to the bodies.

He hung between life and death by a single thread ...

"X X Day, ten li outside the western wall, under the tree near the pavilion."

"ShangGuan JinHong."

Winter had finally arrived. The western winds swept away

the last withered leaves from the trees.

The letter was the same color as the dried yellow leaves. But it was a shade of yellow that brought with it a grim sense of decay. A shade of yellow that was lifeless and frightening.

The letter had only those nineteen words. Simple and clear. It was exactly like the way ShangGuan JinHong killed, never superfluous.

The letter was delivered by one of the workers at the inn. After he read it, his hands couldn't stop trembling.

Sun XiaoHong grabbed hold of the letter, and as she read it, a cold aura of death shivered through her spine and to her hands. Her fingertips suddenly felt extremely cold.

"Tomorrow, it is tomorrow."

"Looking at the calendar, tomorrow is not a good day. Several things aren't right." Sun XiaoHong mumbled.

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "Why would you need to select an appropriate day to kill?"

Sun XiaoHong's gaze was fixed on him. After a while, she asked loudly, "Can you kill him?"

Li XunHuan's mouth stayed shut. The smile on his face slowly vanished.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly stood up and walked out of the room. Li XunHuan couldn't figure out what she was up to. She ran back in with brush, ink, and paper in hand.

A finely polished brush, and premium quality paper.

She didn't look at Li XunHuan but merely said, "You speak, I'll write."

Li XunHuan was a little surprised, "What do you want me to say?"

"Do you have any unfulfilled wishes? Or any unfinished business?"

Her voice was extremely calm, but the brush in her hand shook slightly.

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "You want me to tell you now? I'm not dead yet."

"After you're dead you won't be able to tell me anything." Sun XiaoHong said.

Her head was lowered the entire time, her eyes staring the brush in her hands. But she still couldn't avoid Li XunHuan's gaze.

Her eyes began to water, she bit her lips and said, "You can name anything. Ah Fei for example, is there anything you want me to tell him, or is there anything you want me to do for him?"

There was a certain pain in Li XunHuan's eyes as he sighed and said, "Nothing."

"Nothing? There really is nothing?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"I can urge him not to kill someone, but I can't stop him from loving someone." Li XunHuan replied.

"What if someone else wanted to kill him?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan laughed bitterly and said, "Who would want to kill him now?"

"ShangGuan JinHong ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"If ShangGuan JinHong was willing to let him go, then he won't want to kill him again. Otherwise he'd already be dead by now." Li XunHuan said.

"But what about in the future?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan stared out the window into the distance and slowly said, "The moment of awakening will come even after the longest of dreams. Once that time arrives, he will understand everything for himself. Anything I say to him now is of no use."

Sun XiaoHong was quiet for some time before saying, "What about her?"

It appeared as if she had to muster all of her strength to say those words.

Of course Li XunHuan realized who she was referring to.

The pain in his eyes seemed to deepen. He suddenly walked over and pushed open the windows.

Sun XiaoHong, her head still lowered, said, "If you ... you have any words, anything ..."

Li XunHuan cut her off and said, "Nothing, absolutely nothing."

"But you ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"While she's alive, there will always be someone to look after her. When he passes away, there will be someone to oversee her burial. She has no need of me. She will only benefit from my death." Li XunHuan said.

His voice sounded very calm as well, but he didn't turn his head.

Why was he afraid to turn around?

Sun XiaoHong looked at his thin, emaciated figure from behind. A single drop of tear fell onto the piece of paper.

She quietly wiped away the tear and said, "But you must have something you want to say. How come you're unwilling to tell me?"

"Why do you want me to speak for." Li XunHuan said.

"Once you tell me, I'll forever remember. Then after you die, I'll carry them out one by one, then afterwards ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan quickly turned around and asked, "Then what afterwards?"

"Then afterwards I will die!" Sun XiaoHong replied.

She stood straight up and looked directly at Li XunHuan. She didn't glance away and she didn't try to conceal anything.

"Why ... why do you want to die for?" Li XunHuan said.

"I can't avoid dying, because after you're gone, living will be even worse than death." Sun XiaoHong said.

She was still staring right into Li XunHuan's eyes, not even blinking once.

Her sentiment suddenly became very calm and resolute. It was obvious that she had already made up her mind. No one could convince her otherwise.

Li XunHuan felt a sharp twinge of pain in his chest. He bent down and started to cough excessively.

After his coughing has subsided, Sun XiaoHong sighed and said quietly, "If you want me to live on, then you mustn't die ... ShangGuan JinHong didn't necessarily seek you out to duel. Even he is somewhat intimidated by you."

She suddenly ran over and held his hand and said, "We can run away, run away as far as we can. We'll forget about everything, I ... I can bring you back to my home. No one knows of that place, even if ShangGuan JinHong wanted to seek you out he would never be able to find you there."

Li XunHuan didn't respond, he didn't say a single word.

He just stared at her silently.

A cold wind blew through. A cloud of smoke swirled into the room and muddled his sight.

Mr. Sun's wise old voice filled the room, "No matter what you say, he won't run away."

Sun XiaoHong stamped her foot and said, "How do you know

he won't leave?"

"If he was the kind of person who would run away, then you wouldn't feel how you do towards him." Mr. Sun said.

Sun XiaoHong was silent for a moment, then turned around and covered her head.

Li XunHuan sighed and said, "Elder ..."

Mr. Sun interrupted him and said, "I know what you're thinking, but ... I can only urge her not to kill someone, I can't force her not to love someone."

Love, this is one thing in life that can't be forced.

Li XunHuan started to cough again, even harder than before.

"Ten li outside the western wall, under the tree near the pavilion."

It was an eight sided pavilion. It stood at the foot of a mountain right outside of a forest.

The forest had withered. The paint on the pillars of the pavilion had started to peel off.

The western winds were blistering. The vast plains stood silently.

Li XunHuan walked back and forth along the forest. He had seemingly walked on every stretch of earth along that path.

"Tomorrow, it is tomorrow."

The sun started to set in the west. Another day had passed.

The next day, under the same setting sun, all enmity between Li XunHuan and ShangGuan JinHong would be settled.

This would be one of the most amazing battles in history!

Li XunHuan let out a long sigh and lifted his head. The setting sun filled the entire sky with its beauty and magnificence.

But in the eyes of a dead person, was this eternal sun just as majestic?

Mr. Sun and Sun XiaoHong sat quietly inside the pavilion. Sun XiaoHong suddenly asked, "The time of the duel hasn't arrived yet, why has he come here beforehand?"

"In a duel between experts, not only must you take into account the strengths and weaknesses of a person's martial arts, but you also consider the weather, surroundings, and people. Since ShangGuan JinHong chose this place for the duel, he must have his reasons." Mr. Sun replied.

"What reason is that?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"He must be very familiar with the terrain here, he might have even come here earlier to set up traps." Mr. Sun said.

"So Li XunHuan must come here beforehand to look around and inspect whether ShangGuan JinHong had set up traps and where they could be." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Exactly. The generals of old would always patrol the site

before an important battle. No matter what kind of battle, as long as one first observes the surroundings, one will ensure an advantage." Mr. Sun said.

"But why is he strolling back and forth at that spot?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

"That back and forth stroll has its purpose as well." Mr. Sun said with a laugh.

"Huh?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"He wants to walk over every inch of dirt here and see how the surface is. He wants to know whether it's soft, whether it's parched, or whether it's damp." Mr. Sun replied.

"And what use is that?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Because the dirt can be different at different spots, it can affect one's lightness. If when using seven-tenths of your strength you are able to leap seven meters on wet dirt, on solid dirt you can leap ten meters." Mr. Sun said.

"The difference isn't that much." Sun XiaoHong said.

Mr. Sun sighed and said, "When experts clash, their margin of error can't be more than a single inch!"

Li XunHuan suddenly walked over and stood outside of the pavilion. He faced the evening sun as it set over the withered forest. It brought forth a surge of emotion but no one could really tell what was on his mind.

Sun XiaoHong couldn't help but ask quietly, "And what is he doing just standing there?"

Chapter 76: A Brilliant Tactic

"ShangGuan JinHong will definitely arrive early the day after tomorrow." Mr. Sun said in a deep tone of voice.

"Why is that?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Because whoever arrives first has the advantage of being able to choose the best position on this field. There's no way that ShangGuan JinHong will give up this opportunity." Mr. Sun said.

"Why doesn't Li XunHuan just show up even earlier than him then?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

"It could be that he doesn't like competing over who arrives first ... or perhaps he has another reason altogether." Mr. Sun said.

Mr. Sun let out a little chuckle and added, "Li TanHua is not your average person. Sometimes even I have trouble figuring out his intentions."

"Well the way I see it, all the terrain here looks pretty much the same. I really can't tell which spot would be the most advantageous." Sun XiaoHong said.

"It's where he is standing at right now." Mr. Sun said.

"What's so special about where he is standing at right now?"

Sun XiaoHong said.

"If ShangGuan JinHong were to stand here, Li XunHuan would be directly across from him." Mr. Sun said.

"Mm hmm." Sun XiaoHong nodded.

"The time of the duel is exactly when the sun will set." Mr. Sun said.

"Ahh I understand now. If someone were to stand over there, their back will be to the setting sun so its rays wouldn't affect them at all. However, standing across from that spot would mean that you are facing the sun, and even if you blink once, your opponent will have the perfect chance to attack." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Exactly." Mr. Sun said.

"But why then would ShangGuan JinHong choose to stand at this spot?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Well only by standing here would he discover the disadvantage of this spot. He would then be able to find another spot to take." Mr. Sun said. "If you look at that forest over there, the evening sun is reflecting off the frozen dew on its leaves. So even by standing there you may be slightly blinded."

By now Li XunHuan walked to another tree that was across from them.

Sun XiaoHong's eyes followed his every move. Suddenly a flash of light blinded her ... that tree had the most frost on its leaves and the reflected light from the sun was at its greatest.

"Now do you understand?" Mr. Sun said.

Sun XiaoHong didn't say a word. Li XunHuan suddenly darted up the tree, his body shot upwards and he dashed around almost every single branch on the tree.

"Everybody knows about 'Little Li's Flying Dagger, never leaves the hand unless it hits'. But his lightness skill is also incredible, not many people in this world are his match." Mr. Sun exclaimed.

"What is he doing in that tree though?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"He is testing every limb and branch in that tree to see how sturdy it is. There are two reasons for this." Mr. Sun said.

"Two reasons?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

"Firstly, he wants to make sure the tree hadn't been tampered with by ShangGuan JinHong." Mr. Sun said.

"Tampered with?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"When he is facing ShangGuan JinHong, what would happen if the branches suddenly snapped in that tree?" Mr. Sun said.

"If the branches snapped, then of course they'd come crashing down." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Where would they land?" Mr. Sun said.

"Well on the floor." Sun XiaoHong suddenly realized what he meant and continued, "Or in front of his view, or maybe even on top of his head. It would definitely cause a

distraction, and even the slightest distraction would give the upper hand to ShangGuan JinHong."

"In addition, if he had no other choice, he could choose to run up the tree. What would happen then is that the tree would turn into their battlefield." Mr. Sun said.

"So he needs to carefully examine and observe every last inch of that tree, just like he's doing with the surrounding area here now." Sun XiaoHong said.

"You finally understand." Mr. Sun said.

"I finally understand, who would've known that there is so much behind preparing for a duel." Sun XiaoHong said.

"No matter what you do, when you reach the highest levels, it will always be this involved and complicated. Even if its embroidery or cooking." Mr. Sun said.

Mr. Sun glanced over at Li XunHuan and continued, "Although their duel is set for tomorrow, it really started since the first time they met. What was being tested was their attention to detail, patience, and knowledge. Their chances of victory were set during that time, but the victor will only be revealed the day after tomorrow during their duel."

"Yet all that anyone would ever see is what happens in that instant. There is a saying that goes 'A battle between experts is decided by a single move', but who would've known that there was so much preparation and work behind that single move." Sun XiaoHong said.

A sullen look came over the eyes of Mr. Sun. He struck a flint and lit his pipe, with his eyes focused at the flame he said,

"A true expert in the martial arts definitely leads a lonely life. People only see them in their glory and success but no one ever sees how much they sacrifice, and because of that no one can ever truly understand them."

Sun XiaoHong lowered her head and fiddled with her sleeves as she said, "But don't they need other people to understand them?"

Li XunHuan tucked in his garments and with a gentle push off his legs he vaulted to the top of the pavilion.

Mr. Sun blew out a puff of smoke and said, "Everyone always sees Li XunHuan as a careless and reckless person, but who has ever seen this meticulous side of him? When it comes to important matters, he really doesn't leave any details out."

Sun XiaoHong sighed and said, "That may be because he has already let go of so much ..."

She suddenly lifted up her head and asked, "Since this battle had started a long time ago, in your opinion who is currently winning?"

"I don't think anyone can answer that." Mr. Sun said.

She started to bite down on her lips again.

Whenever her mind was in disarray she would bite her lips, the more in disaray, the harder she bit down.

Right now she was about to bite through her own lips.

"What do you think?" Mr. Sun asked.

"Well ... ShangGuan JinHong seems extremely confident in

himself." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Correct, this is because in recent years he has succeeded in everything he's ever attempted. Except, the death of his son could be a distraction for him." Mr. Sun said.

"Also there's Jing WuMing, his leaving can also be considered a heavy loss to ShangGuan JinHong." SUn XiaoHong said.

"This is why he immediately sought out Li XunHuan to duel, because he was afraid that his confidence would slowly begin to waver." Mr. Sun said.

Mr. Sun sighed and continued, "That is why this duel affects not only the lives of Li XunHuan and ShangGuan JinHong, but also the well being of the entire martial arts world."

"Are the implications of this battle really that great?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

"Firstly, if ShangGuan JinHong really were to win, then his confidence would soar even higher. His actions would become even more bold and I'm afraid by then that there would be no one that could stop him." Mr. Sun said.

Sun XiaoHong's eyes suddenly flickered, "Actually, I think that there is no way that ShangGuan JinHong can win this battle."

"Why is that?" Mr. Sun said.

"Little Li's flying dagger, never released unless it hits! His dagger has never failed before!" Sun XiaoHong said.

"ShangGuan JinHong has never failed before either!" Mr. Sun

said with a sigh.

Sun XiaoHong let out a laugh and interrupted him, "Have you forgotten grandpa? ShangGuan JinHong has failed once before."

"Oh?" Mr. Sun said.

"That day, in a pavilion outside of Luoyang, hadn't he already lost to you?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Mr. Sun didn't say a word.

"I have never asked for anything from you before, grandpa. But now I want to ask just one favor." Sun XiaoHong said.

"What is it." Mr. Sun said as he took another puff from his pipe and engulfed himself in a cloud of smoke.

"I want you to make sure that Li XunHuan stays alive at all costs..." Sun XiaoHong said.

She suddenly knelt down in front of her grandpa and said, "Grandpa is the only one in this world who is able to deal with ShangGuan JinHong, and Grandpa is the only one who can save Li XunHuan. Grandpa should know better than anyone that if he were to die, I really wouldn't be able to live on without him."

The cloud of smoke had dispersed.

But a cloud of smoke appears to have remained in Mr. Sun's eyes.

An autumn mist, sullen and gloomy ...

But a slowly smile appeared on his face.

His eyes gazed into the distance, he slowly stroked Sun XiaoHong's hair and said, "Out of all my granddaughters, you're the most mischievous one. If you were to die, who would there be to pluck my beard and pull at my hair?"

Sun XiaoHong slowly got up and said, "So you'll promise?"

Mr. Sun nodded his head and said, "You were just waiting to hear these words come out of my mouth the whole time weren't you?"

Sun XiaoHong started to blush and replied, "Grandpa should know that as a girl grows up, she can't stay at home. Her heart must turn elsewhere."

Mr. Sun laughed and said, "But your skin is still as thick, whether anyone will want you or not, I can not say."

Sun XiaoHong crawled over to her grandpa's ear and whispered, "I know, but even if he doesn't want me I have ways to make him want me."

Mr. Sun embraced her in his arms as if she was a little girl again and said softly, "You're my favorite granddaughter, but you really are mischievous and way too bold. I was always afraid that you'd never find a family to marry into, but at least you've found someone who you truly like. I can only be happy for you."

"I really am fortunate to have found him, but he is just as fortunate to have found me. In this world, there really aren't many people like me." Sun XiaoHong said giggling.

"I'm sure you're one of a kind in this world." Mr. Sun said

with a smile.

She sat on her grandpa's lap and felt extremely lighthearted and happy.

Because not only did she have an extremely admirable grandfather, she also had an incredibly praiseworthy person in her heart.

Family, romance, she had both. What else could a girl possibly ask for?

She felt that she was the happiest person in the entire world.

She felt that the future was incredibly bright.

The day was starting to fall to night as darkness swallowed up the bright sun.

But she didn't seem to take notice at all.

"Love can blind a person's eyes."

Although this saying is very old-fashioned, the truth behind it will never change.

If Sun XiaoHong could open her eyes right now, she would realize a deep sadness and pain in her grandfather's eyes. Even if others could see that sadness they could never guess from where it came.

Night approaches, a cold wind blows.

It was completely silent except for the sounds of branches and leaves dancing in the wind.

Where was Li XunHuan?

Sun XiaoHong couldn't help but walk out and shout, "What are you doing up there? Why haven't you come down yet?"

There was no response.

Where had Li XunHuan gone to?

Was there really some malicious trap set up on top of the pavilion? Had Li XunHuan already fallen victim to it?

The roof of the pavilion was laid out with red tiles while a golden peak sat at the top.

On top of the peak was a small iron box.

It was a very ordinary iron box, not decorated in any way. There weren't any elaborate mechanisms inside of it that would fire arrows at whoever opened it.

"But what would that iron box be doing atop the pavilion?"

Inside the iron box was a strand of hair.

A long, black strand of hair that didn't seem out of the ordinary.

But Li XunHuan had been staring at this strand of hair mindlessly for quite some time. When Sun XiaoHong was shouting out to him, he seemed like he didn't even hear her.

What was so out of the ordinary about this strand of hair?

Sun XiaoHong just couldn't figure it out.

No one could really figure it out.

Li XunHuan's expression was very heavy, and there was a hint of red in his eyes.

Sun XiaoHong had never seen him like this before. Even when they were drinking wine, Li XunHuan's eyes were always fresh and clear.

What had caused such an abrupt change in him?

They placed the strand of hair on a stone table inside the pavilion.

Sun XiaoHong couldn't hold it in and asked, "Whose hair is this?"

No one answered. No one could answer.

It looked the same as everyone else's hair in the world.

"A strand of hair that is this long, it must be a woman's." Sun XiaoHong said.

She knew that what she said wasn't entirely accurate, because men could have long hair as well.

Because there is a saying that goes 'One's body is a gift from one's parents and should always be treasured.'

If you were to cut your hair, you'd be considered unfilial towards your parents.

There are always stories about girls dressing up as boys but are discovered as soon as their long hair is exposed.

But these stories can only trick little children ... yet strangely enough these stories are still being told today.

Sun XiaoHong stamped her feet and said, "No matter what, its still just a strand of hair. Whats so strange about it?"

"There is." Mr. Sun said.

"There is what?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"There is something strange about it, something very strange." Mr. Sun said.

"What's so strange about it?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Everything about it is strange." Mr. Sun said. "What would a strand of hair be doing inside an iron box? How did that box wind up on top of the pavilion? Who put it up there? And for what reason?"

Sun XiaoHong froze still.

Mr. Sun sighed and said, "If my guesses are correct, this must be the work of ShangGuan JinHong."

"ShangGuan JinHong? Why would he do such a thing?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Because he wanted Li XunHuan to see that strand of hair." Mr. Sun said.

"But ... but he ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"He had probably guessed that Li XunHuan would come beforehand to inspect the area, and probably guessed that he would search the top of the pavilion, so he purposely

placed this iron box there ahead of time." Mr. Sun said.

"But what is the significance behind this particular strand of hair? So what if Li XunHuan sees it? Isn't it kind of silly?" Sun XiaoHong said.

But even as she spoke those words, she felt that there was something wrong, something very wrong.

ShangGuan JinHong was not the type of person who did silly pointless things.

Mr. Sun's eyes were focused on Li XunHuan and asked him, "Do you know who this strand of hair belongs to?"

Li XunHuan was quiet for a long while, he finally sighed and said, "I know."

"But are you totally certain?" Mr. Sun asked.

His tone of voice was sharp and stern, Li XunHuan could only reply saying, "I ..."

"You can't be certain, correct?" Mr. Sun said.

He didn't wait for Li XunHuan to respond before continuing, "ShangGuan JinHong did this because he wants you to believe that the strand of hair belongs to Lin ShiYin, and that she has fallen into his hands. He wants you to be distracted so that he can have the opportunity to kill you. Why fall for his trick?"

"Right, if Ms. Lin really did fall into his hands, why wouldn't he bring her out here in person to threaten you with?" Sun XiaoHong added.

"Because he can't do such a thing ... others can, but he can't." Li XunHuan said.

"Why not?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Because if anyone found out that he used such petty and lowly methods to beat Li XunHuan, then he would be the laughingstock of the entire world." Li XUnHuan said.

"But he hasn't said a single word, all he has done is let you see a strand of hair." Sun XiaoHong said.

"This is why his tactic is so brilliant." Li XunHuan said.

"This strand of hair could very well not be hers." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Perhaps it could, perhaps it couldn't ... no one can be certain." Li XunHuan said.

"Well then why don't you just forget about it and pretend that you never saw that strand of hair. Then his plan would be completely foiled." Sun XiaoHong said.

"But its too bad that I have already seen it." Li XunHuan said.

"It is because he didn't say a single word that would make you suspicious, and because he guessed that you would be suspicious that he would lay out his plan like this. Even though you're completely aware of his intentions, you still chose to fall into this trap of his." Sun XiaoHong said.

He let out a long sigh, smiled and said, "Why do I always run into these kinds of situations?"

Chapter 77: The Secret of Happy Cloud Manor

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "That's just the way life is. Sometimes even when you know that you're walking right into a trap, you have to keep walking anyway."

"Right, if it was someone who I cared for deeply, I would walk into the same trap as well." Mr. Sun said.

Sun XiaoHong stamped her feet, looked at the two of them and said, "Even if you're both willing to be deceived, there's no way that I will be."

"But you've already fallen for his ploy. Even you had suspected that the strand of hair belonged to Ms. Lin. You're already distracted, if you were to duel with someone right now, even if the other person is not your match, you would still lose at their hands." Mr. Sun said.

"But ... but ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

If she were in the same situation, she really didn't know what she would do either.

ShangGuan JinHong's intention was to put Li XunHuan's mind in disarray. Whether Li XunHuan believed it was Lin ShiYin's hair or not, just by him thinking about it, ShangGuan JinHong had succeeded.

How could it not be on Li XunHuan's mind?

She was the one who haunted his every dream, how could he ever forget her?

Even if he knew that it wasn't her hair, he still couldn't help but feel uneasy and his mind would still be in a mess. Because ShangGuan JinHong had already made him think about her.

The problem wasn't whether the strand of hair was hers or not, but what kind of person Li XunHuan was.

This was the only way to deal with Li XunHuan. If you had tried the same on any other person, it might not work at all, because any other person wouldn't think so much and so deeply.

This is why ShangGuan JinHong was so formidable.

He knew how exactly to deal with every single opponent. Although his methods might seem questionable or even silly, their effectiveness was always guaranteed.

Because he understood the most profound rule of military strategy: 'Always attack the opponent's mind'.

Li XunHuan sat down on the floor and stretched out his four limbs.

Even though he didn't say a word, Mr. Sun and Sun XiaoHong knew what exactly was on his mind: to go to Happy Cloud Manor to see whether Lin ShiYin was still there.

Before embarking on this journey, he must first rid himself of his weariness.

Everytime after he made an important decision, he always had to relax his entire body and mind.

This was one of his habits.

It was a very good habit.

Sun XiaoHong stared at him very hard.

"So he hasn't forgotten her, in fact she's more important to him than anything else, no one could ever take her place in his heart ... not even me."

Sun XiaoHong's eyes started to turn red, she couldn't help but ask, "Do you have to go?"

Li XunHuan didn't answer her.

Sometimes not answering is the best answer one could ever give.

"He must go, only by going can he calm his mind." Mr. Sun said.

"But ... what if she really isn't there?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan's eyes almost fell as dark as the night. "No matter what I still have to go. Whatever happens afterwards, I'll decide when that time comes."

"If you go, you'll really be falling into ShangGuan JinHong's trap." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Hmm?" Li XunHuan said.

"ShangGuan JinHong's biggest goal in his plan is to make

you go to Happy Cloud Manor. The duel is already set for the day after tomorrow. Happy Cloud Manor is not close to here at all. Even if you can make it there and back in time you'll be completely exhausted while he is most likely resting and saving up his energy." Sun XiaoHong said.

"There are some things that you know you shouldn't do, but can't help but do nonetheless." Li XunHuan said.

"But if you go, you'll be handing over your life without a fight. Is she really that important to you? Is she even more important than your own life?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan was silent for a while. He then looked up and stared at her.

Sun XiaoHong's eyes were already watery, she turned her head to avoid his eyes.

"I just want you to understand, if you were in my situation you would do the exact same thing. And if you were in her situation, I would do the exact same thing for you as well." Li XunHuan said.

Sun XiaoHong didn't show any reaction as if she had completely missed what he had just said.

But her tears had already started to flow.

When a woman loves a man, she wants to be the only one in his life. She can't have another person in the picture.

But whatever the case may be, Lin ShiYin was already in his heart.

She just stood there idly. What was she feeling right now?

Was it sweet? Was it sour? Or was it bitter?

Mr. Sun let out a long sigh and said, "This is something that he must do, just let him go."

Sun XiaoHong slowly nodded her head and a smile slowly formed on her face. Even though it was a bitter smile, it was a smile nonetheless.

With a tear in her eye, she smiled and said, "I suddenly feel incredibly stupid. He knew her long before he ever met me, and they had a history long before I was ever a part of the picture. If anyone should be upset, it should be her and not me."

"When a person can admit that they are stupid, it really shows how smart they've become." Mr. Sun said with a laugh.

"But there is something that I also must do." Sun XiaoHong said.

"What is that?" Mr. Sun said.

"I have to go along with him, I just have to." Sun XiaoHong said.

"That is fine, except ..." Mr. Sun said as he turned to face Li XunHuan.

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "Since she said that she just has to go, then I guess that she must go."

"It took me almost sixty years before I learned not to argue with women. It seems that you've caught on much more quickly." Mr. Sun said with a laugh.

Li XunHuan stood up and said, "Since we have to go, let us get ready immediately. You..."

"Don't assume that all women are slow and indecisive. Some women are just as to the point as men are. Once they've said that they'll go then they'll go." Sun XiaoHong said.

"When you've arrived there, don't forget to visit your second uncle and see what the situation is like." Mr. Sun said.

"I will ..." Sun XiaoHong said. She caught a glance at Li XunHuan and said, "If he doesn't want me to go inside with him, then I'll wait for him with second uncle."

"Second Hero Sun has been living outside Happy Cloud Manor for over twelve years, do you know why?" Li XUnHuan asked.

He always thought that this was somewhat strange.

Twelve years ago was about the same time that he had decided to leave his house forever. This was about the same time as when Hunchback Sun had decided to take up residence across the street. No matter how much he thought about it, Li XunHuan just couldn't figure out the connection.

Hunchback Sun had no relations with the Li family, nor did he have any relations with Long Xiao4Yun. Lin ShiYin was an orphan since birth and was taken in by the Li family at an early age.

She was an extremely introverted person. She had probably never left that manor in her entire life, much less have any relations with prominent figures in the martial arts world.

If Hunchback Sun was acting on the order of others, who exactly had instructed him to stand guard outside Happy Cloud Manor?

What exactly was Hunchback Sun trying to protect?

There was probably only one person in the entire world who knew the answers to all this, and that person was old Mr. Sun.

He only hoped that Mr. Sun would reveal this secret to him.

But he was about to be disappointed.

Mr. Sun put his pipe to his mouth and began to take another puff.

Sun XiaoHong looked at her grandpa for a second and then said, "There's something that I've always found really strange."

Li XunHuan looked at her and waited for her to continue.

"Long Xiao3Yun cut off his own hand in front of ShangGuan JinHong. Did you know about this?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan nodded his head and sighed, "He was always a very peculiar child, even his actions are rather peculiar."

"That he could cut off his own hand is not what I find weird." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Huh?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"At the time, ShangGuan JinHong had every intention to kill him. He acted first so that he could prevent this. By doing

so, not only did he save his own life, but he also made himself look better as well by saving the life of his father." Sun XiaoHong said.

Sun XiaoHong sighed and continued, "This shows how intelligent and smart he is. But he has always been smart and crafty, this is not what I find strange."

"Then what is it that you find strange?" Li XunHuan said.

"His martial arts had already been crippled by you. His strength should be much weaker than a normal person, correct?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"I have always wondered whether I had done the right thing back then." Li XunHuan said.

"Human bones are quite thick. Only someone with extremely strong wrists would be able to cut off their own hand in one clean swipe. Unless they were using an incredibly sharp and precious sword." Sun XiaoHong said.

"It wasn't such a sword?" Li XunHuan said.

"Absolutely not!" Sun XiaoHong said.

"But once he swung his sword, his hand fell off immediately." Li XunHuan said.

"He appeared as if he didn't use a single ounce of strength at all." Sun XiaoHong said.

"You really are more careful than I am. After hearing your explanation, I do find it kind of weird." Li XunHuan said.

"In addition, if a normal person had their hand cut off,

there's no way they could stand the pain and would definitely faint." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Right, even the strongest of men wouldn't be able to bear the pain, unless they had an extremely powerful inner strength base." Li XunHuan said.

"But Long Xiao3Yun is just a powerless little child, how could he possibly bear the pain of cutting off his own hand?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan had stopped talking, but his eyes flashed back and forth as if he had just figured something out.

"Not only was he able to withstand the pain, but he was able to talk, and even pick up his own severed hand. How could a normal person possibly do such things?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Are you suggesting that he has already recovered his martial arts? That the weak appearance he normally puts up is just a show?" Li XunHuan said.

"I don't know." Sun XiaoHong said.

"When I crippled his martial arts, I was using a lot of force. There really is no way that he could recover, unless ..." Li XunHuan said.

He looked at Sun XiaoHong and said, "Unless the stories are really true, that there really is a long lost martial arts manual hidden somewhere inside Happy Cloud Manor, and that Long Xiao3Yun had somehow stumbled upon it."

"I don't know." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Is the reason Second hero Sun stood guard outside Happy

Cloud Manor all these years somehow related to this martial arts manual?" Li XunHuan said.

"I don't know." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Since you want him to know, why not just tell him outright." Mr. Sun said.

Sun XiaoHong looked at her grandpa and said, "I'm afraid I'll be scolded."

Mr. Sun laughed and said, "The only way that you can get a woman to keep a secret is by never telling them in the first place."

"But I never said anything ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Your method is even better, you didn't have to say anything yourself, but made me reveal it to him instead." Mr. Sun said.

"Even if I did tell, I would only tell him. He ... he's not an outsider." Sun XiaoHong said.

"He's not an outsider."

When Li XunHuan heard these words, he really didn't know how to feel.

He knows that he already owes so much in this life that he won't ever be able to repay.

When a woman no longer considers you an outsider, then it means that she is already set on you. Even if you grew long legs and turned into a horse, you could forget about ever being able to escape.

Mr. Sun's tone suddenly became serious as he said, "There really is a martial arts manual hidden in Happy Cloud Manor, this is not just a rumor."

"Who does it belong to? How come I've never heard about this?" Li XunHuan said.

Mr. Sun lit up his pipe again and as the clouds of smoke circled around in all four directions, he asked, "Have you ever heard of a person by the name of Wang LianHua?"

"I'm sure everyone in the world knows this name, how could I not have heard of him before." Li XunHuan replied.

"Wang LianHua was originally the mortal enemy of the great Hero Shen Lang, later on the two had become the best of friends. Because Wang LianHua had always been someone who was in between good and evil. Although wicked at times, he was never completely evil. Although mischievous and greedy at times, he could also be very righteous and loyal. And although he had harmed Shen Lang on several occasions, Hero Shen had always forgiven him." Mr. Sun said.

[NOTE: The story of Shen Lang and Wang LianHua is told in Gu Long's 'Wu Lin Wai Shi'.]

"I've also heard that Wang LianHua had decided to retire with Shen Lang somewhere past the oceans. This had also happened a very long time ago." Li XunHuan said.

"Correct, Shen Lang had convinced Wang LianHua to reform his ways in the end." Mr. Sun said.

He sighed and continued, "It is very easy to kill someone,

but much harder to get them to change. Hero Shen was definitely an amazing person. If you had been born a few years earlier, I'm sure that the two of you would have been great friends."

Li XunHuan was unable to restrain the look of admiration in his eyes that he had for Shen Lang. But little did he know that for generations to come, his heroic name and story, and the admiration that he would receive, would definitely not be less than that of the great Hero Shen.

"Shen Lang was an amazing talent, but Wang LianHua was not your average person either. Otherwise, how could he have become Hero Shen's greatest rival?" Mr. Sun said.

If there was a great difference between two people in terms of intelligence and talent, although they could be friends, there is no way that they could ever end up as rivals. That is why ShangGuan JinHong was the only one who was qualified to be Li XunHuan's arch rival.

"I've heard that he was one of the most gifted individuals in the martial arts world. Not only in the martial arts, but in scholarly aspects as well. His knowledge of many subjects was broad and deep, he was unmatched in the realm." Li XunHuan said.

"Correct, he was well versed in astrology and divination, music, chess, literature, and art. He was also an expert in medicine as well as disguise. Ten people couldn't learn all the things that he had, yet he mastered them all himself." Mr. Sun said.

He sighed and continued, "But because his interests were so vast, he never fully devoted himself to the martial arts. Otherwise, with his intelligence and talent, he probably

would not have been beaten at the hands of Shen Lang."

Li XunHuan suddenly thought of Ah Fei.

Was Ah Fei's talent even greater than Wang LianHua?
Because he only focused on one field, the sword. His sword's potential was boundless and was well on its way to becoming virtually invincible.

"It is unfortunate that the talented always choose to do stupid things."

Li XunHuan let out a sigh and didn't want to think about it any further.

"After Wang LianHua had reformed his ways, he realized that all the he had learned was not only too mixed and diluted, but also too unorthodox. He had originally planned to put his 'LianHua Compendium' to the torch." Mr. Sun said.

"'LianHua Compendium'?" Li XunHuan said.

"It was a complete volume of all the knowledge that he had accumulated during his lifetime." Mr. Sun.

"Why did he want to burn it?" Li XuanHuan said.

Chapter 78: A Horrific Battle

Li XunHuan wondered why Wang LianHua had decided to burn the manual containing his entire life's work.

Mr. Sun explained, "Because not only did it contain his martial arts theories, it also contained his art of using poisons, appearance-changing disguise methods, insect summoning and hoarding methods from the Miao tribes, and soul-possessing hypnosis techniques from Persia ..."

He sighed and continued, "If such a book were to fall into the wrong hands, the consequences would be dire."

"Yes it really would be catastrophic." Li XunHuan said.

"But this book was the blood and sweat of his entire life's work, he just couldn't bear to destroy it. So before he left to retire from the world, he entrusted the book to someone who he knew he could definitely rely on." Mr. Sun said.

After hearing this, Li XunHuan slowly pieced the story together in his mind and concluded that the martial arts manual hidden within Happy Cloud Manor must be the 'LianHua Compendium'.

But there were still a few things he couldn't understand, such as, who did Wang LianHua entrust this manual to?

"He entrusted it to you!" Mr. Sun said.

A look of shock came over Li XunHuan's face as he exclaimed, "Me?"

Mr. Sun laughed and said, "Beside Li TanHua, who else in the world is more qualified to give this manual to?"

Mr. Sun continued, "When he entrusted you with the 'LianHua Compendium', not only did he want you to protect it for him, he also wanted you to find an incredibly gifted and kind-hearted disciple to whom to give it to, so that his legacy could live on."

"But I do not know about this at all." Li XunHuan said.

"Because at that time you had already decided to leave." Mr. Sun said.

"Twelve years ago ... right. That time I had to make a trip to the border regions, and returned with severe injuries. If it weren't for Long Xiao4Yun who had saved my life, I would've ..." Li XunHuan said.

At that point, he suddenly felt like there was something in his throat and he couldn't say another word.

This was one of the things in his life that he would never forget.

It was because of that event that his entire life had changed ... from happiness to misery!

"Although Wang LianHua didn't see you, he was able to meet with Ms. Lin. Because he was in a rush to leave, he

couldn't wait any longer and had to leave the 'LianHua Compendium' with her." Mr. Sun explained.

No one understood the relationships between men and women better than Wang LianHua. He was able to recognize that Lin ShiYin and Li XunHuan were more than just acquaintances.

But how come Lin ShiYin had never brought this incident to his attention before?

"Where did elder hear this story from, is the source reliable?" Li XunHuan asked.

"Definitely reliable." Mr. Sun said.

Sun XiaoHong couldn't help but blurt out, "We heard this from second uncle himself. When old master Wang visited Happy Cloud Manor to see Ms. Lin, my second uncle was waiting right outside."

She sighed and continued, "Since that day forth, my second uncle has never set a single foot outside that place!"

"Was he instructed by Wang LianHua to keep an eye on me?" Li XunHuan asked.

"Since master Wang was willing to entrust this heavy responsibility with you, of course he wouldn't have doubts about you. But he was not entirely confident in your martial arts at the time, he was afraid that once word leaked out, there would be many people who would try to come steal the manual. That's why he instructed my second brother to stay there just in case you were in need of help." Mr. Sun said.

"During the time when my second uncle wandered the realm, he had once been saved by old master Wang. My uncle had always been a person who showed gratitude so when old master Wang asked this favor of him, he was much more than willing to help." Sun XiaoHong said.

"But afterwards, he had discovered that Ms. Lin had never given you the manual. And since you had left for the border regions, he became increasingly worried and never dared leave that place." Mr. Sun added.

"Second Hero Sun is really a man of his word. He treats favors asked by others as if they were his own business and concern. Except ..." Li XunHuan said.

"How would Second Hero Sun know that Ms. Lin had never given me the 'LianHua Compendium'? Even I had no idea of such a thing." he added.

Mr. Sun took another puff from his pipe and replied, "If even you didn't know, then how would I know?"

Li XunHuan had nothing more to say.

He never thought that Lin ShiYin would hide something like this from him.

"Not only was Wang LianHua able to kill a person, he had ways to save a person as well. The medical and healing methods of his were sublime. One could say that he was able to bring the dead to life and put meat on bones." Mr. Sun said.

"Long Xiao3Yun is Lin ShiYin's only son, a mother will do anything for her son, that's why I'm afraid that she ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

She didn't continue on.

Li XunHuan understood what she was trying to say ...
anyone would've understood what she was trying to say.

Lin ShiYin must have given this 'LianHua Compendium' to her son, she must have kept its existence a secret for an extremely long time.

But why hadn't she ever told him about this?

The first time that Li XunHuan saw her, she was just a child.

It was snowing that day.

The plum blossoms in the courtyard had just bloomed, the snow underneath the plum tree was particularly pure and white.

At the time Li XunHuan was under the plum tree building a snowman. He was searching around for the blackest, brightest lumps of coal that he was preparing to use for the snowman's eyes.

This was one of the happiest times of his life.

It wasn't that he loved making snowmen, he only built snow men to enjoy the moment when he could lay in its eyes. That fat clumsy pile of snow would suddenly turn into something that had some semblance of life. And he would just feel an indescribable satisfaction and happiness from it.

He had always loved to create, and had always hated destruction.

He had always been passionate about life.

And he would always secretly knock down the snow man because he was afraid that another person would steal this happiness from him. But he didn't understand back then that certain kinds of happiness can't be taken away by other people.

Later on he would understand that happiness was like a treasure vase, the more that you gave to others, the more that you would have yourself.

Suffering was the same.

If you want others to share in your pain, your suffering would just increase.

The snow man's face was round.

He was contemplating where to put its eyes. His extremely sick mother who rarely left her bed suddenly walked into the courtyard with a young child clothed in a red robe at her side.

It was a scarlet red, brighter than the reddest plum blossoms.

But the child's face was pale, paler than the white snow.

Red and white were always his favorite colors. White represented purity, while red represented passion.

The first time that he saw her, he felt an unspeakable compassion and pity towards her. He felt like he just had to go over and grab her hand lest she be blown away by the wind.

"This is your aunt's daughter. Your aunt had to leave for a faraway place, so from now on she will be staying with us." his mother told him.

"You always wanted a sister, now I've found one for you. You must always be good to her and never let her be upset."

But it was as if he didn't hear what his mother said at all.

Because that little girl had already run to his side and stared at the snow man that he was making.

"Why doesn't he have eyes?" she asked.

"Would you like to put on his eyes?" he asked.

She nodded her head.

He gave the two dark pieces of coal to her.

It was the first time that he shared his happiness with another person.

From that time forward, he would always share everything that he had with her. Even when other people would give him cookies, he would always keep them in his pockets. When he finally saw her he would break the piece in half to share with her.

Just as long as he could see that look of joy in her eyes, he felt that the happiness he experienced could not be replaced by anything else in the world.

He was willing to share his own life with her.

She felt the same way. He knew it. He believed it so.

Even during the times when they were apart, he always felt deep down inside that he was the only one who could share sadness, happiness, secrets, and everything with her.

He believed it so, that is until now ...

A narrow alley, snow had accumulated from the day before.

The snow had begun to melt, the ground was muddy and wet. There was a dry path along the wall but Li XunHuan purposely walked in the muddy snow. He enjoyed the soft, comforting feeling of his feet sloshing in the mud.

For some reason it calmed his mood.

In the past he had always hated mud, he would have rather walked around in a big circle than walk on a muddy path.

But now he suddenly realized that mud could have its endearing aspects as well. It quietly endured your trampling while at the same time softly enveloping your feet in its protective grasp.

Weren't there some people in this world who were like mud? They constantly endure the hate and resentment of others, while never holding a grudge and never retaliating ...

If there wasn't mud and soil in this world, how would seeds ever sprout? How would trees ever grow?

They never showed hate or resentment because they are very well aware of their own self-worth.

Li XunHuan let out a long sigh and lifted his head.

The walls looked like they had been freshly cleaned, but the sign on top of Hunchback Sun's shop looked worn and ancient.

From where he stood, he couldn't see anyone inside.

It was still light out so of course he couldn't make out any candle or lantern light either.

"When night arrives, would the lonely light in that small building still be lit?"

Li XunHuan's mind wandered off thinking about things he didn't want to think about again. For the past two years he had always sat in that chair in the corner watching and waiting for that lonely light.

Hunchback Sun always accompanied him quietly on the side. He never spoke, nor did he ever ask.

Sun XiaoHong let out a sigh as well and said, "Dinner time hasn't arrived yet so the shop should be pretty empty. I wonder what second uncle is up to now? Is he busy cleaning the tables?"

Hunchback Sun was not cleaning the tables.

He would never clean those tables again!

They could see a hand on the table.

The hand was holding on to a wash cloth, and holding on very tightly.

The door was shut closed. They knocked but there was no

answer, they called out but there was still no answer.

Sun XiaoHong was even more worried than Li XunHuan, she knocked the door down, and saw that hand.

A hand that had been cut off at the wrist.

Sun XiaoHong was startled and rushed over to the side of the table.

This was the same table that Li XunHuan had always drank wine at for the past two years.

The color of Li XunHuan's face turned pale, he recognized that hand. For the past two years that hand had poured him wine a countless number of times.

When he was drunk, that hand would help him to his room.

When he fell sick, that hand would brew medicine for him.

But now, that hand had changed into a dry shriveled piece of dead flesh. The blood had already congealed, and the tendons had already contracted. The fingers which grasped on so tightly to that wash cloth seemed like they were grasping on for dear life.

Was he scrubbing the tables when someone suddenly cut off his hand?

The table looked sparkling clean and shiny.

When he was wiping this particular table, was he thinking of Li XunHuan?

Li XunHuan suddenly felt a wrenching pain in his chest.

Sun XiaoHong's tears had started to stream down her cheek as she asked, "You know who this hand belongs to?"

Li XunHuan nodded his head slowly.

"Where is he ... where is his body?" Sun XiaoHong said trembling.

She suddenly rushed out. The small shop was empty, completely empty.

When she came back in, Li XunHuan was still standing by that table, his gaze still fixed on that hand.

Four of its fingers were crumpled within the wash cloth. One of its fingers pointed outwards, straight as an arrow, towards a window in the shop.

That window was wide open.

Li XunHuan looked up and stared out that window.

Sun XiaoHong followed his gaze and looked out the window as well. Suddenly the two of them ran to the window and leapt out at the same time.

Outside, the cold wind was chilling to the bones, even the water in the gutters had frozen over.

There was a small alley that was not much wider than the gutters. Perhaps it wasn't an alley and was really a gutter.

They followed it to its end and saw a tiny door. They didn't know to whose house it led, no one probably used this door at all.

It was a dead alley anyway.

The back door was unlatched. On the handle was a red palm print, one that had been stained red with blood.

Sun XiaoHong rushed over and examined it, and then turned around and looked at Li XunHuan.

Her lips were already starting to bleed from her biting down too hard, she said, "ShangGuan JinHong already calculated that you would come to this place."

Li XunHuan didn't open his mouth.

"He knew that you wouldn't go to Happy Cloud Manor first because you wouldn't want to see Long Xiao4Yun. He probably figured that you'd come to check up on second uncle first." Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan didn't open his mouth.

"All of this is a trap that was purposely set up for you." Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan's mouth was shut tight.

"So you mustn't enter this door." Sun XiaoHong said.

"And you?" Li XunHuan suddenly remarked.

"It won't matter for me, I'm not the one that ShangGuan JinHong is trying to kill." Sun XiaoHong said.

"So you can enter." Li XunHuan said.

"There's no way I can't enter." Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan let out a long sigh and said, "It looks like you don't understand me as much as ShangGuan JinHong does."

"Oh?" Sun XiaoHong replied.

"If he really is setting up a trap for me, he would know that I would definitely enter this door. Even if someone had hacked off my two legs, I would still crawl through this door!" Li XunHuan said.

Sun XiaoHong stared at him, her warm tears started to flow again.

She suddenly walked over and wrapped her arms around him, her warm tears streamed onto his face.

She wiped his face off, as if she was using her own tears to wipe away his tired weariness. Because there really was only one thing in the world that could alleviate a man's weariness - the tears of his lover.

Li XunHuan's tense arms and legs started to loosen. He finally couldn't help but reach out and hold her as well.

The two of them held each other very tightly.

Because it was the first time that the two of them had embraced, but it could very well be the last!

It almost seemed as if the sun didn't want to shine onto that alley, it was extremely dim and murky.

It was even darker behind the door.

Once they pushed the door open, an extremely pungent odor passed through that made them want to throw up.

It was the smell of rotting flesh and blood!

Then, they heard an extremely weird sound. It sounded like an animal gasping for its last breath before it died. Or more like ghosts of the underworld screaming to be let free.

But the sound really did seem to be coming from the ground!

There were twenty some odd people under them, they gnashed their teeth at each other and were like animals fighting for their lives.

No one opened their mouths, not even under knife point would anyone dare to open their mouths.

There were originally twenty-six of them. Nine had already fallen. The seventeen left were separated on two sides. The seemingly stronger side far outnumbered the weaker side.

They numbered twelve and all were clothed in yellow. All of them were armed with rather strange and unusual weaponry, one of them even had an iron abacus.

The other side originally had nine people but now there were only five. One of them was blind.

There was also a large burly man with a red sash, he was completely unarmed.

His body was his weapon!

There was a cold flash of light, a fish-scale sabre hacked into

his left shoulder. It was like an ax chopping into wood, the sharp blade of the sabre was stuck into his flesh but was caught in his bones!

The man in yellow tried but couldn't pull his sabre out as the burly man struck him on the chest with his palm. He could almost hear the sound of his own bones being smashed.

PENG, his entire body was sent flying.

But the burly man could no longer lift his left arm. He suddenly shouted, "You guys escape first, I'll stay here and hold them off. Hurry!"

None of them retreated. None of them answered him either.

One of the people on the floor suddenly got up, and said in a coarse voice, "We can't retreat, even if we die we have to take him out with us!"

They were in an underground tunnel, lanterns were lit all year long.

The lanterns were laid into the wall. Under the dim light, you could make out that she was female, a tall, large, and fat woman. She had a scar that went from her eye to the corner of her mouth.

Her right eye was blind, she only had her left eye remaining as it stared at the burly man.

There was nothing in that eye except vengeance, a vengeance that wouldn't disappear even in death.

"Lady Butcher", Madame Weng!

And who was this large burly man? Could it be the person that hadn't been heard from in many years, Tie Chuanjia?

It really was him!

With the exception of Tie Chuanjia, who else in the world had such a hard skeleton?

Madame Weng struggled to climb to her feet, she stared at Tie Chuanjia and said mockingly, "This person is ours. No one else may lay a single finger on him, no one!"

SHAN, there was another cold flash of light as she fell to the floor once again.

There was no way that she would get up this time!

Here eyes were still wide open, and they were still staring at Tie Chuanjia.

She died very painlessly and very fearlessly.

Because the only thing that was on her mind was vengeance. Besides vengeance, she felt nothing else at all.

Tie Chuanjia gritted his teeth as another sword pierced into his body. He stamped his feet and said, "You people really aren't going to go? If all of you are dead, who will take me away?"

The blind man laughed coldly and said, "Even if we're all dead, we'll still take your soul away with us!"

Although his martial arts were even more formidable than those who weren't blind, he was still a blind man. He relied completely on his ears to listen to movements and

distinguish the position of his opponents.

But whenever anyone talked, their ears are never as sharp as usual. Before he finished his two sentences, a tiger hook lashed out and opened up a large wound on his chest.

The hook was twirled and raised up as flesh and blood hung down from it.

Tie Chuanjia almost couldn't hold it in and wanted to vomit.

Although he had killed before, he was never that vicious. Although his skeleton was extremely hard, his heart was very soft.

But now, his hands had turned soft as well, and he could no longer kill.

He suddenly shouted out, "And what if I were to die at your hands?"

The blind man laughed and said, "We had nothing to do with what happened here, we only came here for you."

Another person said in a harsh voice, "If the 'Eight Righteous Ones of the Central Plains' can't take your life with our own hands, our deaths would be in vain!"

This person's face was full of pockmarks, he carried two sabres, one short and one long, and was the descendant of the Northern Sect's 'Yin Yang Sabre', GongSun Yu.

Tie Chuanjia suddenly started to laugh. At a time like this, why would anyone be laughing?

His laugh really made people's hairs stand on its ends, he

said, "So you only wanted to kill me with your own hands, then that's easy ..."

He swung his hand backwards and pushed back one of the men in yellow. He then suddenly ran straight towards the blade of GongSun Yu.

GongSun Yu was startled as his short sabre plunged into Tie ChuanJia's chest!

He stood firmly and panted as he said, "All my debts to you have now been repayed, why aren't you all retreating yet?"

GongSun Yu's face writhed in confusion, he suddenly let out a roar and pulled his sabre out from his chest.

A rain of blood sprayed onto his chest.

His roar was suddenly cut short as he fell down onto the floor, on his back was a three-foot long floral spear.

The red tassel at the head of the spear was still shaking unceasingly.

Tie ChuanJia fell over as well, as he kept repeating the same words from his mouth.

"All my debts to you have now been repayed, why aren't you all retreating yet?"

He watched as another spear stabbed towards him, he didn't try to block nor did he try to avoid it.

Chapter 79: A Righteous and Loyal Comraderie

GongSun Yu let out another roar as he crawled on top of his body, "We must have been wrong, he definitely didn't ..."

His voice died out again.

Another spear had been plunged into GongSun Yu's back!

The spear was pulled out. Under the dim light from the lanterns on the walls, there appeared to be a hazy mist in the tunnel.

A light pink mist.

A mist of blood!

Where twenty six people originally stood, sixteen had already fallen.

This bloody massacre didn't seem to be over yet. The stronger and weaker sides seemed to be even further apart now.

A medicine peddler who had about six wounds on him said in a husky voice, "Tie ChuanJia is already dead, let us leave this place!"

There were only three of them left in this losing battle. There really was no way that they could hold off any longer.

One of them who wielded an axe in his hand, a 'Mt. Hua Splitting' axe, gritted his teeth and said, "Second brother, should we retreat?"

The blind man replied, "Retreat? The 'Eight Righteous Ones of the Central Plains' would rather die before retreating. I'll strike down whoever mentions the word 'retreat' again!"

One of the men in yellow laughed and said, "Good! You've got some guts! Then today let us deliver on your death wish ..."

His voice was suddenly cut short as well. His eyes bulged out like a dead fish.

He died rather quietly, only a *GAAK* *GAAK* sound came from his throat.

His breath hadn't stopped, but he just couldn't finish his sentence. He tried with all his strength but not a single word would come out. Because protruding from his throat was what appeared to be a dagger.

A dagger seven inches long:

Little Li's flying dagger!

All movement suddenly stopped, everyone's eyes were fixed on that dagger!

No one knew where in the world that dagger had come from, but every single one of them knew who had arrived.

Everyone in that underground tunnel had their mouths drop wide open.

Li XunHuan was standing right before them.

But no one dared to turn their head to look at him, they feared that once they turned their head, that soul-searching life-taking dagger would suddenly appear in their throats.

They were all the most loyal and accomplished members of the 'Gold Currency Union', not a single one of them was a coward that feared for his life. But by now, they were all exhausted and weak, they had seen too much death and too much bloodshed.

This had already sapped them of much of their courage, and in addition, 'Little Li's flying dagger' was renowned throughout the world not just as a dagger, but as an almost demonic entity!

Now those four words became even more closely tied with the meaning of death.

Or perhaps only now did they truly understand the meaning of death.

The dead body of one of their companions laid at their feet.

Just a blink of an eye ago, he was still a living breathing human being.

Then, that dreadful dagger instantly turned him into a dead corpse.

His life suddenly became completely meaningless, before he could ever realize it.

Nothing else was more terrifying than this sudden change, what they feared was not death, but this horrifying apprehension.

The blind man suddenly said, "Li TanHua?"

Although he couldn't see a single thing nor did he hear any sound whatsoever, he could somehow sense Li XunHuan's presence, he could sense a terrifying killer aura.

"Yes." Li XunHuan replied.

The blind man let out a long sigh and slowly sat down.

Jin FengBai and the woodcutter followed as he did and slowly sat down as well. They sat down right in the pool of blood where GongSun Yu and Tie ChuanJia's bodies laid. By the looks of their eyes, they had seemingly sat down in another world.

In that world, there was no vengeance and there was no suffering.

Li XunHuan slowly walked over in front of the men in yellow.

His hands were empty, no dagger was in sight.

But it seemed as if there was a dagger in his eyes.

He stared at them and asked, "Where is the person that they brought with them?"

The men in yellow were are staring at their own feet.

Li XunHuan sighed and slowly said, "I don't want to force

you, but I hope you all won't force me to either."

One of the men in yellow who stood across from him, whose face was full of cold sweat and whose body was trembling, suddenly asked, "Are you looking for Hunchback Sun?"

"Yes." Li XunHuan responded.

That man in yellow suddenly had a weird smile on his face and said loudly, "Fine! I'll take you to find him, just follow me!"

His weapon was a tiger-head hook, after that sentence was finished, his hand raised up. The tip of the hook penetrated into his own throat.

He could no longer withstand that horrifying apprehension. Death became his quickest way of escape.

As Li XunHuan watched his body fall to the floor, he slowly clenched his fists.

"Hunchback Sun was already dead!"

The death of that man in yellow was his reply!

But what about Lin ShiYin?

A hint of fear suddenly appeared in Li XunHuan's eyes. His eyes slowly moved up from the corpse as his pupils contracted.

Then, he suddenly heard Tie ChuanJia's voice. Sweat and blood was all over his face and covered his eyes. He could barely see and panted heavily and said, "Yi MingTang, Second Brother Yi ..."

The blind man whose expression was usually like stone started to twinge, he bit down on his teeth and answered, "I am here."

"Has ... has my debt been repaid?" Tie ChuanJia said.

"Your debt has been repaid." Yi MingTang said.

"There is one more thing that I want to say." Tie ChuanJia said.

"Speak." Yi MingTang said.

"Although I have wronged Brother Weng, I never betrayed him, I only ..." Tie ChuanJia said.

Yi MingTang interrupted him and said, "You don't have to say anymore, I understand."

He really did understand.

A person who betrayed his friends would never sacrifice his own life in such a situation.

Not only did Yi MingTang understand this, Jin FengBai and the woodcutter understood this as well.

It was a pity that they all realized too late.

Tears started to form in Yi MingTang's eyes, eyes that had been blind for so many years.

Li XunHuan saw it, he saw it very clearly.

It was the first time that he realized that blind people were

able to shed tears as well.

Warm tears were already flowing from his eyes.

Warm tears that fell onto the cold face of Tie ChuanJia. He knelt down and lightly wiped off the blood and sweat from Tie ChuanJia's face.

Tie ChuanJia finally opened his eyes, as soon as he saw Li XunHuan, he exclaimed, "Young master! Young master ... you really came!"

He was overcome with joy, he struggled to stand but kept collapsing back to the floor.

Li XunHuan knelt down beside him and said, "I have come, we will have plenty of time to talk later."

Tie ChuanJia struggled to shake his head as he said with a painful smile, "I can die now with no regrets, there is nothing else left for me to say."

Li XunHuan said with tears in his eyes, "But there are still things that you must say. The fact that you hadn't betrayed Brother Weng, why don't you clear everything up? Why did you avoid it for so long?"

"I avoided it not for my own sake." Tie ChuanJia said.

"Then for whom?" Li XunHuan asked.

Tie ChuanJia slowly shook his head from side to side.

His arms and legs were convulsing in pain, but the expression on his face remained calm and at ease, a gleeful smile formed from the corner of his lips.

His death was very peaceful.

One of the most difficult things to do in life is to die a peaceful death!

Li XunHuan knelt motionlessly beside him, his entire body fell numb.

He obviously knew who Tie ChuanJia had died for.

He had most likely arrived at Happy Cloud Manor before Li XunHuan and discovered ShangGuan JinHong's plans to ambush him and had followed them to this underground tunnel. If for any reason he knew that Li XunHuan was in danger, there wasn't a place that Tie ChuanJia wouldn't go to help him.

But how did he uncover ShangGuan JinHong's plot?

And what were the secrets between him and Weng TianJie, Brother Weng? That even in death he was unwilling to disclose?

"Just what are you hiding? Although you can die with no regrets, how can I ever rest peacefully not knowing how you came to this end?" Li XunHuan said sullenly.

"I think I know what he was hiding." Jin FengBai suddenly shouted.

"You ... you know?" Li XunHuan said.

Jin FengBai's face had always been dark and foreboding but now it was sickly green.

He gritted his teeth and said, "The friendship and loyalty that Brother Weng showed towards others was widely known, I'm sure you've heard about this as well."

"I have." Li XunHuan said.

"As long as it was from a friend, there wasn't a single request that he'd deny. And because of this, his expenses were always very great. But he wasn't like you, he didn't have a father who was an Imperial Magistrate." Jin FengBai said.

Li XunHuan smiled.

"So he was always in poverty. Someone who lived in poverty, but had many friends, and also demanded respect, would be forced to think up other ways to repay his debts." Jin FengBai said.

"Are you saying ... that Brother Weng engaged in illegal businesses?" the woodcutter said.

"Right, I had accidentally overheard about this. But I could never bear to reveal the truth, because everything that Brother Weng had done was out of necessity." Jin FengBai said.

He suddenly continued loudly, "But everyone who Brother Weng had taken advantage of must have had it coming to them and probably deserved it! Although what he did was take advantage and rip people off, it was never anything that went against his morals or his conscience."

"And what relation does Tie ChuanJia have with this matter?" Yi MingTang asked.

"After many deals, people had started investigating his

business dealings. One of Tie ChuanJia's close friends turned out to be the inspector that was given this case. The two of them had long suspected Brother Weng, but weren't certain of his guilt.

"So that's probably why Tie ChuanJia befriended Brother Weng, so that he could investigate further and act upon finding evidence." the woodcutter said.

"I think that's what most likely happened." Jin FengBai said.

He continued, "Tie ChuanJia was unwilling to reveal this because Brother Weng had always been good to him. He soon came to regard Brother Weng as a good friend, there was no way that he'd reveal this to ruin Brother Weng's reputation after his death. So he took all the blame and false accusations upon himself. He really wasn't running away this whole time for his own sake."

"But why haven't you ever told us about this?" Yi MingTang said.

"Me ... ? How would you expect me to reveal this to everyone? Brother Weng had always been so generous and kind towards me. Even Tie ChuanJia was unwilling to reveal this, how could I ever bear to do it?" Jin FengBai said.

"Great! You really are a true friend of Brother Weng's. A true friend!" Yi MingTang said.

There was a cold smile on his face but his entire body was trembling.

"I know that it was really unfair to Tie ChuanJia but I had no other choice, I really had no other choice ..." Jin FengBai said.

His voice kept lowering as he spoke, he suddenly picked up a sabre, it was the same sabre that had just taken Tie Chuanjia's life. He turned it towards himself and plunged it into his chest at exactly the same place that the sabre had stabbed into Tie Chuanjia.

Although he was writhing in pain, he had the same type of smile on his face that Tie Chuanjia had earlier, "I really owed him too much, but now, at least that debt has been repaid in full!"

He died very peacefully as well ...

One of the most difficult things to do in life is to die a peaceful death.

Yi MingTang suddenly started laughing madly, "Excellent! You were brave enough to reveal the truth, and brave enough to repay this debt, you really are a true friend of mine! At least we 'Eight Righteous Ones of the Central Plains' never do anything that would disgrace ourselves!"

His laughter started to sound like a weeping cry.

The woodcutter suddenly knelt in front of Tie Chuanjia's body and bowed once, then he turned to Yi MingTang and said, "Second brother, I will go ahead first."

Yi MingTang's laughter abruptly stopped as he changed immediately to a cold and calm demeanor and said, "Okay, go on ahead."

"I'll be waiting for you." the woodcutter said.

His axe rose up, blood sprayed across the floor, he died even

faster, and even more peacefully.

If he hadn't seen it with his own eyes, Li XunHuan would've never believed that there people who were this unafraid of death.

There wasn't a trace of emotion on Yi MingTang's face as he turned to Li XunHuan and said, "I haven't left yet, because there is still something I must tell you."

Li XunHuan could only nod his head.

"You should've figured out by now that we had been hiding out here for a very long time, because we expected Tie ChuanJia to return here sooner or later, so there is much that we know about what happened." Yi MingTang said.

He slowly continued, "We knew about ShangGuan JinHong's plot from the very beginning. Long Xiao4Yun knew about it as well. I had always found it weird why you would befriend such a person."

Of course Li XunHuan had nothing to say to that either.

"Tie ChuanJia found out about this trap from Long Xiao4Yun, he had purposely leaked this information to him because he wanted to send Tie ChuanJia to his death. But he didn't anticipate that we would have followed him here because there was no way that we would allow Tie ChuanJia to die in the hands of someone else." Yi MingTang said.

He continued, "But concerning Madame ... Miss Lin ShiYin, she did not fall into harm's way, nor did she fall into ShangGuan JinHong's hands. If you pay a visit to Happy Cloud Manor, you will definitely be able to see her there."

Li XunHuan felt a warm surging feeling in his chest, was it gratitude? Or was it happiness?

"And now all enmities concerning us eight have been settled, I can only hope that you will bury all of us together. And if anyone should ask about the 'Eight Righteous Ones of the Central Plains', I only hope that you will tell them that although we had made mistakes during our lives, that we tried our best to right our wrongs in death." Yi MingTang said.

The remaining men in yellow had already quietly slipped away. Although Li XunHuan had seen them leave, he didn't bother to stop them.

Nor did he bother to stop Yi MingTang.

Because he knew that Yi MingTang really would not be able to live on.

As long as a person could die with his mind at ease, what else could he ask for?

Death meant nothing to them.

But now as Li XunHuan looked at the floor that was littered with corpses, he couldn't help but start shuddering, because he realized the brutality and horror of 'vengeance'.

No matter how deep that vengeance was, it had all been settled now.

Yi MingTang was perfectly correct, although they had made mistakes during their lives, they were able to die with honor, dignity, and a clear conscience.

There are few people in this world who are able to die as they did.

Li XunHuan's arms and legs were cold to the point of trembling now, the burning in his chest felt like fire.

He fell to his knees in a pool of their blood.

It was the blood of true men!

He calmly knelt there, he preferred the company of these dead men much more than the devious smiles of the living.

"A real man is unshaken by joy in life and unshaken by fear in death!" If a person can really die without regrets, then what is so frightening about death?

But it really is hard to die in such a way!

Sun XiaoHong hadn't stepped foot inside that place the entire time. It wasn't that she was afraid, but she couldn't bear to witness such a gory scene. She realized that men really were different from women.

She realized that being a woman was a blessing in its own way.

Night.

In the small shop, there was a single light and two people.

The light was very dim, their mood was even dimmer ...

The light lay in front of Li XunHuan. Wine also lay in front of

Li XunHuan. But it seemed like he didn't even have the strength to lift his cup, all he could do was stare idly into it.

The flame danced and flickered.

After who knows how long, Li XunHuan finally let out a sigh and said, "Let's go."

"I ... am I coming with you?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

"We came together so of course we'll leave together." Li XunHuan responded.

"We're leaving? But aren't you going to pay a visit to Happy Cloud Manor?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

Li XunHuan shook his head.

"But wasn't the whole reason we came for was to go to Happy Cloud Manor?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

"There's no need to now." Li XunHuan replied.

"Why not?" Sun XiaoHong said.

He stared into the light and said, "Yi MingTang assured me that she is safe, that is enough for me."

"And you're relieved by simply hearing his words?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"He is the type of person who is definitely trustworthy." Li XunHuan said.

She blinked and asked, "But ... don't you want to see her?"

Li XunHuan fell silent and then slowly answered, "Seeing her will be like not seeing her. Since she is safe, there's no need for me to go."

"But since you're already here, would it hurt to just see her?" Sun XiaoHong said.

He fell silent again, then suddenly smiled and said, "I suddenly feel happy again. Since my mood has come back, it makes no difference whether I see her or not."

Sun XiaoHong sighed and smiled, "You really are a strange person, other people can never understand the things that you do."

"You'll understand sooner or later." Li XunHuan replied.

She stared dumbly at him for a few moments before saying, "But you should at least stay to ensure that they get a proper burial."

"They can wait, but ShangGuan JinHong can't." Li XunHuan said.

He smiled a very bittersweet smile and continued, "Dead people are much more patient than the living, wouldn't you say?"

Chapter 80: A Terrible Mistake

"So you're not as loyal as I had thought. Well at least more loyal to the living than to the dead." Sun XiaoHong said jestingly.

"When did we start heading out yesterday?" Li XunHuan suddenly asked.

"It was nighttime, about the same time as it is now." Sun XiaoHong replied.

"And at what time did we arrive here today?" Li XunHuan asked.

"Late afternoon, it wasn't yet dark outside." Sun XiaoHong said.

"And how did we get here?" Li XunHuan said.

"We rode a carriage for quite some time, then traveled by foot until this morning, and afterwards we went on horseback." Sun XiaoHong said.

"So even if we traveled the same way as we had before, we still wouldn't be able to get back before late afternoon." Li XunHuan said.

"Right." Sun XiaoHong replied.

"But now, we haven't slept for quite some time. We won't have as much energy as we had yesterday, so there's no way we can travel at a faster pace than yesterday." Li XunHuan said.

"But yesterday I wasn't quite able to keep up with you. No wonder grandpa had said that your speed is just as incredible as your dagger." Sun XiaoHong said.

"So even if we left now, I may still not be able to make it back in time to duel with ShangGuan JinHong" Li XunHuan said.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly fell silent.

He lifted his head, looked at her and said, "You should be encouraging me to leave now, you know that I can't miss this meeting."

Sun XiaoHong turned away and bit down on her lips as if she was trying to hide from his gaze.

After a while, she said softly, "I only want you to promise me one thing."

"What is it?" Li XunHuan said.

"This time let's only go by carriage, let's not go on foot or on horseback." Sun XiaoHong said.

"You want me to rest on the way." Li XunHuan said.

"Yes. If you don't rest now, you'll be exhausted when you finally do see ShangGuan JinHong. You can't really duel with

him if you're knocked out on the floor." Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "Okay, I'll listen to you, we'll take a carriage."

Sun XiaoHong immediately lit up with happiness, "We can bring wine onto the carriage as well. If you can't fall asleep, I'll drink with you along the way."

"Once I start drinking, eventually I'll be able to fall asleep." Li XunHuan said.

"Great, as long as you can get some rest during carriage ride, ShangGuan JinHong won't be a match for you." Sun XiaoHong said with a smile.

"You really have a lot of faith in me." Li XunHuan responded with a smile.

She looked into his eyes and said, "Of course I have faith in you, otherwise why would I ..."

Her face started to blush, she suddenly ran out and said gleefully, "I'll go look for a carriage while you prepare the wine. And if there's time, you should go see her, I promise that I won't be jealous."

Her ponytail flew up and down as she ran and within a few moments she was out of sight.

Li XunHuan saw her off before slowly standing up and walking out of the door himself.

He looked up high, above the walls was a small room in one corner.

The light in that small room was lit.

What about the person inside?

Was she quietly sewing clothes for her beloved son?

The extent of a mother's love was like an unending thread of string.

But it still wasn't as lengthy as loneliness, nothing in this world was as lengthy as loneliness.

One year after another, one month after another. A thread that could not be sewn. A loneliness that could not be mended.

She had already buried her own life, that small room was her grave.

A person ... a woman ... without youth, without love, without joy, what did she live for?

"ShiYin ... ShiYin ... you have suffered way too much."

Li XunHuan suddenly bent down and started coughing, coughing out blood!

How could he not want to see her?

Although his body was standing still, his heart had already flown into that small room.

Although his heart had flown into that room, his body was still standing right there.

He didn't dare to go, he just couldn't go. Even if it were to be

the last time he'd ever see her, he still just couldn't go ... seeing her would be like not seeing her. And what could he do even if he did see her?

She was no longer his, she had a husband, a son, and her own world.

She was really in an entirely separate world.

She used to be his, but now he couldn't even cast a single eye on her.

Li XunHuan wiped the blood off his lips and tried to swallow back down the blood in his mouth.

Even the blood tasted bitter, extremely bitter.

"ShiYin ... ShiYin, I'll be satisfied no matter what just as long as you're safe and at peace. Whether in hell or in heaven, the day will come when we can see each other again."

But was Lin ShiYin really at peace?

Blistering cold wind, he looked even more emaciated than a chrysanthemum flower.

Li XunHuan stood lonesomely in the western wind. Was he hoping that the wind would carry him away?

After some time Sun XiaoHong had returned. She looked at him foolishly and said, "You ... you didn't go see her?"

Li XunHuan shook his head and said, "Did you find a carriage?"

"The carriage is waiting just ahead, if you're really not going

to see her, then let's get going." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Let's go!" Li XunHuan replied.

The carriage rocked back and forth along the road, wine wavered back and forth inside his cup.

It was finely aged wine.

The carriage seemed even older than the wine, while the horses seemed even older than the carriage.

Li XunHuan wagged his head and said with a smile, "If only the horse pulling this carriage were Lord Guan's 'Red Hare', then this carriage would instantly become an antique. It's pretty amazing that you were able to find such a carriage."

Sun XiaoHong couldn't contain her laughter, she lifted up her chin and said, "You're not pleased with my arrangements?"

"No, no, I'm satisfied, very satisfied." Li XunHuan said.

He closed his eyes and said, "As soon as I stepped foot into this carriage, I suddenly remembered something from a very long time ago."

"Oh? What did you remember?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"I remembered a wooden horse that I used to play with when I was younger, it feels like I'm rocking back and forth the same way on this carriage." Li XunHuan said.

Before he could finish his sentence, he felt something go into his mouth.

"After you finish eating these dates, hurry up and get some rest." Sun XiaoHong said with a smile.

"If I really could fall asleep and never wake, it would be pretty nice, unfortunately ..." Li XunHuan said.

Sun XiaoHong cut him off and said, "I got this carriage because I wanted you to be able to sleep well. As long as you can fall asleep, we can switch carriages in the morning."

Li XunHuan downed his cup of wine and said, "If that's the case then I'll drink a few more cups so I can sleep soundly."

The wine in his cup swung back and forth, her ponytail wagged back and forth as well.

Her eyes were warm and radiant like the starlight outside the carriage.

The starlight was like a dream.

Li XunHuan was falling into inebriation.

On such a beautiful night, with such a beautiful companion, how could he not fall into a drunken stupor?

Since he was drunk, how could he not fall asleep?

Li XunHuan leaned to one side and lifted up his legs onto the seat of the carriage and mumbled, "Sages and heroes were always plagued with loneliness and had nothing but alcohol to keep them company ... but isn't drinking the night away just as depressing?"

Everything fell quiet, soon there was only silence.

He had finally fallen asleep.

Sun XiaoHong stared at him quietly. After a long while, she reached out and ran her hand through his hair and said softly, "Sleep, sleep peacefully. After you wake up, all your sadness and trouble will be a thing of the past. And when that time comes, I won't let you drink so much anymore."

Her eyes started to glow brightly, they filled with joyous expectations.

She was still young.

Youths are always optimistic about the world, they assume that things will always go the way they planned.

She didn't understand that the world simply didn't work that way. The way things turn out are always far off from what we expect. If she knew just how far off her expectations were, her clothes would be soaked with tears.

The carriage driver was leisurely sipping his wine as well.

He didn't seem to be in a hurry.

Because the young lady that called for the carriage had instructed him so!

"Take your time on the road, we are not in a rush to get anywhere."

The carriage driver smiled to himself. If he were riding in a carriage with his sweetheart, he wouldn't be in a hurry to get anywhere either.

He was really envious of Li XunHuan, he felt that Li XunHuan

was really lucky.

But if he knew the kind of situation that Li XunHuan and Sun XiaoHong were in, he probably wouldn't be able to swallow that wine in his cup.

The next day had arrived.

When Li XunHuan woke up, sunlight had already flooded through the carriage window.

He didn't know how he had fallen asleep for so long. Was he simply tired? Or was it the wine?

Li XunHuan picked up his cup and sniffed it but slowly put it back down.

The carriage was still shaking back and forth as it rolled down the road. It was moving very slowly, stopping here and there, as if the driver was slowly dozing off.

Sun XiaoHong had fallen asleep on his lap.

Her long hair flowed down his legs like water.

Li XunHuan stuck his head out the window but couldn't see the carriage's shadow.

The sun was directly overhead.

After some distance there was a stone tablet by the side of the road that had the name of the village ahead.

The time that he had agreed to meet with ShangGuan JinHong was fast approaching, a little less than six hours away.

But they were only half way there.

Li XunHuan suddenly felt his hands go cold as they started to tremble.

There were times when he was worried, sad, or troubled, and there were times when he was happy, but rarely was he ever angry.

Right now he wasn't quite angry, but very close to it.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly awoke and felt him shaking. She looked up and saw the angry expression on his face, it was an expression that she had never seen before.

She lowered her head, her eyes already turning red, and said, "Are you upset at me?"

Li XunHuan's mouth was shut, shut very tightly.

"I knew that you would be upset at me but I still would've done the same thing. I don't care if you scold me or hit me, just as long as you understand that I did this for your own good." Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan let out a long sigh. His entire body relaxed, his heart softened as well.

What Sun XiaoHong did really was for his sake.

What did she do wrong? As long as she whole-heartedly wanted the best for him, how could he blame her?

"I understand how you feel, I don't blame you. But why can't you try to understand how I feel as well?" Li XunHuan said.

"You ... you really don't think I understand how you feel?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"If you understood how I felt, you would know that even if you did stop me from meeting with ShangGuan JinHong this time, what about in the future? I have to confront him sooner or later, it could even be tomorrow." Li XunHuan said.

"By tomorrow, everything will be different." Sun XiaoHong said.

"What will be different by tomorrow?" Li XunHuan said.

"By tomorrow ShangGuan JinHong will already be dead, he probably won't live past tonight." Sun XiaoHong said.

The way she spoke was particularly strange, as if she was very confident in what she said.

Li XunHuan couldn't figure out why she sounded so confident so he thought for awhile.

"No one will blame you for not showing up today. Besides, it was all ShangGuan JinHong's doing. If he didn't force you to go to Happy Cloud Manor, then you wouldn't have been this late." Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan was still lost in thought, but the expression on his face slowly changed.

Sun XiaoHong's mood seemed to lighten as she leaned beside him and said, "Once ShangGuan JinHong is dead, no one will say that ..."

Li XunHuan suddenly cut in and said, "Did your grandfather

tell you to do this?"

Sun XiaoHong blinked and said jokingly, "Well, maybe it was, maybe it wasn't."

"Is he going in my place to confront ShangGuan JinHong?" Li XunHuan said.

"Correct, you should know that once ShangGuan JinHong sees my grandpa, it'll be like a mouse seeing a cat. I think he is the only person in this world who can deal with ShangGuan JinHong." Sun XiaoHong said.

She held his hand and wanted to continue on but suddenly fell silent because she felt that his hands were colder than ice.

If a person's heart wasn't filled with fear, why would their hands turn this cold?

But what was he afraid of?

Seeing the expression on his face she was afraid to ask.

"Did you grandfather want to go himself, or was it you who had asked him to?" Li XunHuan questioned her.

"Does ... does it make a difference?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Yes, it makes a big difference." Li XunHuan said.

"It was I who asked him to go, because when dealing with people like ShangGuan JinHong, it doesn't matter who kills him. It doesn't necessarily have to be you." Sun XiaoHong said.

He nodded his head as if he was in agreement with what she said, but there was an entirely different expression on his face.

Not only did he look frightened, but extremely grieved as well.

Sun XiaoHong couldn't help but ask, "Are you worried?"

Li XunHuan didn't have to answer, his expression answered for him.

"I don't quite understand what you're worried about ... is it grandpa?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan finally sighed and said in a low tone of voice, "I'm worried for you."

"You're worried for me? Why?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Everybody makes mistakes in life. There are some mistakes we make that can be fixed but there are others that are forever irretractable." Li XunHuan said.

Now there was not only grief in his eyes, but a deep feeling of pain as well.

He looked straight at her and continued, "If you make a mistake that can never be fixed, no matter what your intentions were, you'll have to carry this burden for the rest of your life. Even if other people forgive you, you will never be able to forgive yourself. It really is a horrible feeling."

He understood this feeling very well.

Because of one mistake that he made in his life, he had to

pay a terrible price.

She looked back at him and suddenly felt a strange foreboding feeling, "Are you worried that I am going to do something wrong?"

After a long pause, Li XunHuan asked her, "All these years, have you always been traveling with your grandfather?"

"Yes." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Have you ever seen him use his martial arts?" Li XunHuan asked.

"I don't think so ..." Sun XiaoHong replied.

Chapter 81 : An Unintentional Tragedy

Sun XiaoHong quickly added, "But this is because he never had the chance to, he never needed to."

"He never needed to?" Li XunHuan said.

"Because he has no equal." Sun XiaoHong said.

"But what about ShangGuan JinHong?" Li XunHuan said.

"He ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

She suddenly stopped talking, did something just occur to her?

"Your grandfather must have objected to ShangGuan JinHong's actions and deeds." Li XUnHuan said.

"He ... he really was very annoyed with the way that ShangGuan JinHong acted." Sun XiaoHong said.

"But he never went to face him." Li XunHuan said.

Sun XiaoHong lowered her head and said, "No, he didn't ..."

"Why would he just tolerate it for so long? And why would he only decide to confront ShangHuan JinHong after you had

asked him to?" Li XunHuan said.

Her mouth suddenly felt parched, she was at a loss for words.

"When a person's martial arts reaches its peak, a certain fear is bound to arise. Fear that others will catch up with you, fear that your own skills will recede. And when that time comes, you will try your best to avoid it. In fact, you will try your best to avoid doing anything at all." Li XunHuan said.

He sighed and continued, "And the more that you refuse to act, the sooner that you will really be unable to act. Some suddenly decide to go into seclusion, while others become self-destructive - preferring to just end everything in death ... this has always been the common trend in history. Unless you are really able to step past the material world and enter a stage where you forget about human emotions, and become completely oblivious to the world and its people."

Sun XiaoHong felt her body slowly stiffening up, cold sweat covered her face.

Because she knew that her grandfather was not 'emotionless'.

He still cared about a lot of things, and a lot of people.

"But I could be wrong ..." Li XunHuan said.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly flung herself over and embraced him tightly.

Her body was shaking like the cotton underneath a bowstring.

She was scared, very scared.

Li XunHuan gently brushed her hair. Was it compassion? Sympathy? Or sorrow?

A person who didn't have feelings would never do such a thing.

A person like that would never make a mistake.

But why did the heavens always force the passionate ones in this world to make mistakes that could never be corrected?

Was a person wrong simply for being sentimental?

Sun XiaoHong started to twitch as she burst into tears, "Please, please hurry back with me. Just as long as we can hurry back there ... no matter the price ... I'll do anything."

There were sounds of horses neighing coming from the window, they were in a stable.

If there was one thing Li XunHuan could do, it was picking out horses. Many people knew that this was so, Li XunHuan was not only an expert with woman, but also with horses. It wasn't easy to be an expert in these two fields.

Beacause horses and women were both very difficult to understand.

He picked out the two fastest horses he could find.

The prettiest woman was not necessarily the most lovable one. The fastest horse was not necessarily the strongest one. Beautiful women lack sincerity, fast horses lacked endurance.

Two horses fell over.

Two people started to run frantically.

The evening sun drew near.

Two people ran as hard as they could, they didn't care what the people around them thought, they didn't care how tired their bodies felt.

They didn't care about anything.

The night drew near.

There was no longer anyone on the road.

The stars and the moon were nowhere to be seen on this night, there was not a single light in sight.

A dark forest lay to the side of the road, outside of the forest was the outline of a pavilion.

Wasn't this the arranged place for the duel?

In the middle of the dark night, there seemed to be a glimmer in the distance.

As the light started to get brighter, an outline of a person could be seen.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly let out a sigh of relief as her entire body loosened up.

It was a miracle that she was able to keep running for so long, or perhaps she was driven by fear.

Fear can bring out a person's hidden strength.

But now, she saw it, she saw the one thing that she was hoping to see. Her panting suddenly stopped.

She collapsed onto the ground.

Li XunHuan didn't dare to let out a sigh of relief yet.

As he saw that light flash back and forth, he noticed that it flickered in a strange rhythm. Sometimes it was exceedingly bright, while other times it would dim dramatically.

Suddenly, that light flared up like a giant lantern.

That day, outside a different city, under a different pavilion, Li XunHuan had seen this exact type of flickering light.

That day, Old Mr. Sun was in that pavilion puffing on his pipe.

With the exception of Mr. Sun, Li XunHuan had never seen that bright of a light come from someone smoking on a pipe.

Li XunHuan felt warm tears swelling up in his eyes.

Sun XiaoHong was on the floor, slowly sobbing as she got up.

These were tears of joy, these were tears of gratitude.

The heavens really didn't dictate that she would commit a grave mistake.

Li XunHuan helped her up as the two walked towards the

pavilion.

The pavilion seemed to be full of smoke, a person was sitting right in the middle.

The fragrance of the smoke was very familiar to Sun XiaoHong.

She felt a surge of warmth in her chest, she let go of Li XunHuan's hand and dashed towards the pavilion.

She only wanted to run straight into her grandfather's arms to tell him how grateful she was.

She couldn't help and screamed out, "Grandpa! We're back ... we've come back!"

The light in the pavilion suddenly went out.

Then, they heard a person solemnly say, "Excellent, I've been waiting for the two of you!"

The voice was cold, aloof, and resolute, completely void of tone and completely void of emotion.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly stood still. The warmth that she felt suddenly turned freezing cold, so cold that it froze her in place.

That voice was like a club, striking her from heaven back down to earth.

Suddenly, four lanterns lit up.

Four yellow lanterns hung from sticks of bamboo.

Under the glowing yellow light, sat a single person. He looked as cold as gold, as resolute as gold, even his heart seemed to be forged out of gold.

He was puffing on a pipe.

The pipe that he was puffing on was Old Mr. Sun's pipe.

But he was ShangGuan JinHong!

The person puffing on the pipe in that pavilion was ShangGuan JinHong!

Blistering cold wind, torridly freezing rain.

Nobody knew when it had started to pour.

Sun XiaoHong just stood in the rain, her body entirely still, entirely stiff.

She wanted to scream, but didn't have the strength. She wanted to rush in, but her body wouldn't move.

Her chest was convulsing, she was about to vomit.

But not even a single tear would come out.

Li XunHuan had been walking at a slower pace than her, but now he just kept walking towards the pavilion, his steps hadn't stopped.

But his breath had already stopped.

He slowly walked up to the pavilion and stood face to face with ShangGuan JinHong.

ShangGuan JinHong didn't turn his head towards him, his eyes were still focused on the pipe in his hands.

"You're late."

After a long pause, Li XunHuan responded, "Yes, I'm late."

He felt his entire mouth dry up. Bitterness. It was as if his tongue was rubbing up against iron, it was an indescribable taste.

Could it be the taste of fear?

"Better late than never." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"You should've known that I would come sooner or later." Li XunHuan said.

"Its a pity that the person that should've come arrived late, and the person that shouldn't have came early." ShangGuan JinHong said.

After those words, both of them fell silent. They stood face to face staring at each other, none of them moving a muscle.

They were both waiting for the opportune moment.

Once they made a move, it could not be taken back!

In the midst of the rain and wind, under the dark forest, there were two more people, two more pairs of eyes.

Those two pairs of eyes were fixed on Li XunHuan and ShangGuan JinHong.

One pair of eyes was as soft and gentle as water, bright and radiant like stars. Even if you searched the entire world, it'd be hard to find another pair of eyes as beautiful as this.

The other pair of eyes was deathly pale, they seemed to meld into the lifeless night. Even if you searched all of hell, it'd be hard to find another pair of eyes as frightening as this.

Even if there were ghosts and demons secretly hiding in that forest, they would've long fled.

This pair of eyes could make ghosts and demons tremble on their feet.

Lin XianEr and Jing WuMing had arrived long before anyone else, and they had been hiding here for a very long time.

Lin XianEr stood beside Jing WuMing and was clenching tightly onto his shoulder.

Jing WuMing didn't make a sound, and didn't move a muscle.

"If you want to kill him, now is the best chance, there won't be a better one than this." Lin XianEr said.

"Someone else is trying to kill him right now. There is no need for me to attack." Jing WuMing said.

"I'm not telling you to kill Li XunHuan." Lin XianEr said.

"Then who?" Jing WuMing asked.

"ShangGuan JinHong, kill ShangGuan JinHong!" Lin XianEr

said.

She was trembling with excitement, her fingernails dug into Jing WuMing's skin.

Jing WuMing didn't move, nor did he feel the pain.

But there was a strange fire in his eyes, it looked like the flames of hell.

"He is fully concentrated on Li XunHuan right now, he won't have the strength to deal with anyone else. In addition, he has no idea about your right hand, you'll definitely be able to kill him." Lin XianEr said.

Jing WuMing still didn't move.

"You're the most familiar with the operations of the 'Gold Currency Union', once he is gone, you will be its new Chief." Lin XianEr said.

She started to grunt under her breath.

Her grunting didn't sound very pleasant at all. She sounded like a pregnant dog.

"Even if you don't want that position, you should at least pay him back for what he did to you. So that when he gets to hell, he'll regret how he treated you." Lin XianEr said.

Jing WuMing's eyes still looked like they held the flames of hell. Those flames started to flare intensely.

"Go, hurry, if you miss this chance, you'll be the one who will regret it, not him." Lin XianEr said.

Jing WuMing nodded his head and replied, "Okay, I'll go!"

"Hurry, I'll wait for you here. Once you succeed, I'll be yours forever." Lin XianEr said.

"You don't have to wait for me." Jing WuMing said.

"Why?" Lin XianEr said.

"Because you're coming with me!" Jing WuMing said.

Lin XianEr suddenly felt that something was wrong.

A hint of fright showed in her beautiful eyes as Jing WuMing started to squeeze her wrist.

Lin XianEr never liked to fall to tears. She felt that women who had to turn to tears were not only weak but repulsive and foolish as well.

Besides, she had much better ways to get men to do what she wanted.

But now, she was in so much pain that she couldn't help but start tearing.

She could almost hear the bones in her hand shattering,
"What did I do wrong? Why are you treating me like this?"

"In your whole life, you've made one mistake." Jing WuMing said.

"What?" Lin XianEr said.

"You shouldn't have assumed that everyone loves you the way that Ah Fei does!" Jing WuMing said.

Li XunHuan had his back to the forest.

He did not see Lin XianEr and Jing WuMing as they emerged from the forest, he was focused solely on ShangGuan JinHong. But what he did see was a strange look come over ShangGuan JinHong's face.

ShangGuan JinHong's concentration was suddenly broken.

He never gave his opponent such an opportunity before, and he definitely would never reveal such an opening ever again.

But Li XunHuan didn't strike, his dagger stayed in his hand.

Because he felt a terrifying killer aura coming from behind him.

His flying dagger was not thrown with just his hand, it was thrown with his entire body and essence. If he had released his dagger, he would have had no way to defend an attack from behind him.

His foot turned and slid seven feet. And he saw Jing WuMing.

Jing WuMing was standing directly behind him.

Then, he saw Lin XianEr, he had never seen such a look of distress on her face.

It started to pour even harder.

Every one of them was completely drenched.

Even though lanterns hung from the corners of the pavilion, their lights paled in the darkness of the night.

Jing WuMing stood in the darkness, he looked like a shadow, as if he wasn't even there.

But Li XunHuan had shifted his gaze from ShangGuan JinHong to him.

ShangGuan JinHong had also shifted his gaze from Li XunHuan to him.

Because they both felt that victory and defeat no longer lay in their hands, but in Jing WuMing's.

Jing WuMing started to laugh, very loudly.

In his entire life he had never laughed so hard before.

ShangGuan JinHong let out a sigh and said, "Just keep laughing, because you have every right to be laughing."

"Why aren't you laughing?" Jing WuMing said.

"It just won't come out." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Why's that?" Jing WuMing said.

"You know the reason." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"You're right. I do know the reason." Jing WuMing said.

He stopped laughing, slowly stood up straight, and said, "Because now I am the one who can decide both your fates, while both of you won't even dare to attack me."

He was right, no one dared to attack him.

If ShangGuan JinHong made a move on him right now, he would leave his defenses wide open for Li XunHuan. There was no way he would risk giving Li XunHuan such a chance.

Li XunHuan was in the same exact situation.

"I can help you kill Li XunHuan, or I could help Li XunHuan kill you." Jing WuMing said.

"I believe that is so." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Do you? I'm not just a cripple who has outlived his usefulness anymore?" Jing WuMing said.

"Everyone makes mistakes in judgement from time to time." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"How do you know you've made a mistake? I really could be just a cripple." Jing WuMing said.

"Your right hand is even stronger than your left." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"How can you tell?" Jing WuMing said.

"Lin XianEr is not a weak woman, it'd be difficult for anyone to hold her down with just one hand." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Jing WuMing slowly nodded his head and said, "You really can tell. Its a shame that you realized a little too late."

"Not only can I see that, I can see that I've made a mistake

as well." SHangGuan JinHong said.

"You really regret what you've done to me?" Jing WuMing said.

"Yes I really do regret what I've done to you, I should've killed you instead!" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"So why didn't you kill me?" Jing WuMing said.

"I couldn't bear to." ShangGuan JinHong said.

A strange look came over Jing WuMing's face, "Even you can't bear to kill sometimes?"

"I'm also human." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"So you think I won't kill you either?" Jing WuMing said.

ShangGuan JinHong glanced over at Lin XianEr and said, "She definitely wanted you to kill me."

"She did." Jing WuMing said.

"But if you really wanted to kill me, you wouldn't have brought her over here." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Lin XianEr suddenly burst out in laughter.

She had fallen to the ground and was laughing madly, it really was quite a startling sight.

"Of course he is afraid to kill you. If you were dead, he wouldn't be able to live on either. I finally understand now that he only lives for you. He came here because he wanted you to acknowledge his worth. But in front of anyone else,

he wouldn't be worth a penny." Lin XianEr said.

"But it'd be very easy for him to kill you." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"You think he is willing to kill me? ... When you wanted to kill me, he wanted to save me, do you know why?" Lin XianEr said.

ShangGuan JinHong said coldly, "Because he wants to kill you in front of me."

"You're wrong, he doesn't want to kill me in front of you, he wants you to kill me with your own hands ..." Lin XianEr said.

She laughed and said, "When we were together, he was insane with jealousy. Back then I thought it was because of me, but now I understand that it was because of you. He despises anyone who gains favor with you. Even your son is not an exception ... you do know who killed your son, don't you?"

"As long as he kills for me, it doesn't matter who he kills." ShangGuan JinHong replied emotionlessly.

The smile on her face slowly vanished. She let out a long sigh and said, "I always thought that I understood men very well, but I really don't know what the two of you are thinking. I really don't understand what the relationship is between the two of you."

She smiled coldly and continued, "All I know is that whatever is is, it is undoubtedly disgusting. I don't care what the two of you have to say, I won't hear a word of it."

"Although you know very little, you've said way too much."

ShangGuan JinHong said.

"But no matter what I say, there is no way I can convince you to kill him, isn't that right?" Lin XianEr said.

"There is no way!" ShangGuan JinHong said.

Lin XianEr turned to face Jing WuMing and said, "And there's obviously no way I can convince you to kill him either, right?"

"Right." Jing WuMing said.

Lin XianEr let out a sigh and said, "It looks like I'm going to die in your hands. The only question is by whom? Will it be you? Or you?"

Jing WuMing didn't say another word.

He lifted his hand and threw Lin XianEr towards the ground at ShangGuan JinHong's feet.

Lin XianEr didn't struggle to get back up this time, she didn't move at all. She just crawled up into a ball on the ground.

But she was a woman.

You could expect her not to move and not to resist, but you couldn't make her shut her mouth.

Chapter 82: Unspoken Consolation

If you were to pay close attention to a woman who was about to die, you would notice that the last part of her body to stiffen would be her tongue. This is because the most sensitive part of a woman's body was her tongue.

"I should've figured it would be you. The whole reason why he brought me here was so that he could watch you kill me with your own hands. Only then would he be satisfied." Lin XianEr said.

"And will you feel satisfied knowing that you'll die in my hands?" ShangGuan JinHong asked.

"Well that depends on how you plan on killing me. I hope it won't be a quick death, because only by dying slowly can one savor the taste of death." Lin XianEr said.

She suddenly started laughing, "We only get this chance once. Even if I have to endure unbearable pain, it'll all be worth it."

"And if you were to die slowly, you'd be able to say a couple more words. Talking can help alleviate the pain of death and it can also lessen its frightfulness." ShangGuan JinHong said coldly.

"There's no way you'll kill me off quickly will you? I know

you enjoy watching people die a slow and agonizing death. And I've treated you pretty well, haven't I? I entrusted all my hard-earned wealth with you and let you do with it as you pleased. When you ordered people to kill me, you clearly wanted to eliminate me from the picture." Lin XianEr said.

"Right. You're not even worth a single penny now. That's why I don't even want to bother killing you." ShangGuan JinHong said.

He suddenly kicked her towards Li XunHuan.

This time she couldn't say a word. Her drenched clothes grasped tightly onto her skin.

Her curvaceous figure was ravishing beyond words.

After all, she was the most beautiful woman in the world. Not only was she attractive, but extremely smart as well.

She could've been very well off.

But now, she couldn't even die a proper death.

She was supposed to be an angel living amongst the clouds, but now she was like a wild dog stuck in mud.

How did it come to this?

Was it because she didn't know how to appreciate all that she had?

It started to pour even harder.

Li XunHuan stared at Lin XianEr crawling around in the mud, he suddenly felt sadness and empathy.

Not for her, but for Ah Fei.

She had brought it all upon herself, but what about Ah Fei?

Ah Fei hadn't done anything wrong.

Although he chose the wrong person to love, he was not wrong for being in love.

ShangGuan JinHong looked over at Li XunHuan and said, "I didn't kill her because I figured you'd have more reason to kill her than I do, so she's yours."

Li XunHuan was silent for a long while. He finally let out a long sigh and said, "It looks like you've underestimated me again."

After a long pause, ShangGuan JinHong nodded his head slowly and said, "You're right, I have underestimated you. You won't kill her either."

He slowly continued, "The act of killing requires a murderous intent, and you need very ounce of it focused on me. Why would you waste any of it on a person like her?"

"To kill, one must kill the right person. To kill, one must kill in the right place." Li XunHuan said.

"Is something wrong with this place?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Originally, no. But now, yes." Li XunHuan said.

"What is wrong with it?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"It's getting too crowded here." Li XunHuan said.

"Is he making you feel uncomfortable?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Yes." Li XunHuan said.

He didn't want to hide it. Even if Jing WuMing didn't attack, he was still a threat to him.

Because his sword could come out at anytime. There was no one in this world who could withstand a combined attack from the two of them.

ShangGuan JinHong sunk his head and said, "I understand what you mean, but now that he has returned, no one can convince him to leave, isn't that right?"

That last part was directed at Jing WuMing.

"Yes." Jing WuMing said.

Even though he stood far away from him, anyone would notice that Jing WuMing and ShangGuan JinHong were like one being, one indestructible force that couldn't be stopped.

Li XunHuan let out a sigh, he suddenly thought of Ah Fei. If only Ah Fei were here ...

ShangGuan JinHong read his mind perfectly and said, "If Ah Fei were present then you would have a chance, its unfortunate though ... that he is such a disappointment."

"I was never disappointed in him. No matter how many times some people fall, they will always get back up." Li XunHuan said.

"You believe that he is such a person?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Of course he is." Li XunHuan said.

"Well even if you're right, by the time that he stands back up, you'll have already hit the ground. And I can guarantee that when you fall this time, you won't ever be able to get back up." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Now ..." Li XunHuan said.

"Now you don't even have the slightest chance."
ShangGuan JinHong said.

Li XunHuan suddenly laughed and said, "You should at least let me pick the place then. If a person is about to die, they should at least have the right to choose where they are going to die."

"You're wrong, the person who kills has that power, the person who is to be killed has no such right. But ..."
ShangGuan JinHong said.

He stared at Li XunHuan and said, "I'll make an exception in your case. Not only are you a good friend, but a worthy adversary as well."

"Thank you." Li XunHuan said.

"So where do you wish to die?" Li XunHuan said.

"If a person has suffered his whole life, he will want to die a comfortable death." Li XunHuan said.

"Dying can never be comfortable." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"I just want to find a place where it isn't raining, and change into a fresh set of clothes. I don't want to die soaked and drenched in this nasty wet place." he smiled and continued, "Honestly speaking, except when I'm taking a bath, I always prefer that my body to be dry."

"I've always heard that you're unafraid of death but I could never get myself to believe it, because I don't believe that there's anyone in this world who is not afraid of dying. But now ... I can somehow see how it could be true." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Oh?" Li XunHuan said.

"When a person still has the mood to say such words when they know they're about to die, it shows that the person really doesn't value life and death. That's why I find it quite strange." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Strange?" Li XunHuan said.

"The only thing that we have to fear in life is death. But if you are unafraid of death, then why should you even care whether you're dry or not when you die?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

He looked at Li XunHuan and said, "That's why I think you have ulterior motives for doing this."

"And what could those be?" Li XunHuan said.

"Some people would think that you're merely stalling for time. Because even when faced with imminent death, some people will do everything they can to postpone it just a

longer. Perhaps they think some sort of hope or chance will appear, or at the very least they get to live just a few moments longer." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"And you think that's my reason?" Li XunHuan said.

"Of course not, I've never really underestimated you before." ShangGuan JinHong said, "You know that there won't be any sudden miracles, no one in this world can save you now. And also, I know that you're unafraid of death."

"Well then, what do you think I'm trying to do?" Li XunHuan said.

"I think you're just searching for an opportunity to let the two of them escape, because you know that I won't kill anyone here before killing you. A person won't waste his appetite on bread if he knows that a grand feast is waiting for him." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"That's a pretty bad analogy." Li XunHuan said with a smile.

"Perhaps, but its not that far off." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Li XunHuan's smile looked very forced, "But do you really care whether the two of them live or die?"

"I don't have to." ShangGuan JinHong said.

It really was of no concern to him.

If they lived, they were of no threat to him.

If he wanted them to die, he could kill them anytime he wanted to.

Li XunHuan couldn't even bear to look at Sun XiaoHong.

But whatever the case, she was still alive now, and she was still breathing.

That was enough for him.

What else could he possibly do for her?

"But I've already said that I'd make an exception for you, because you're different from anyone else." ShangGuan JinHong said, "Since you've lived so cleanly, the least I can do is to make sure that you don't die in filth, like some wild dog in the mud."

Death. How would he die? Where would he die?

None of this was important.

The only thing that mattered was that he could die peacefully.

But what about Sun XiaoHong?

He couldn't bear to look at her this whole time. He didn't dare to either.

Because he couldn't afford to break his concentration.

But he had to leave now, she must have known that this would probably be the last time she would ever see him again. He wasn't just going to some foreign place, he was leaving this world.

How would she be able to follow him this time?

He was afraid that she would want to accompany him, that she would want to die together.

If she were to do this, he'd be forced to knock her unconscious, or seal her acupoints and then slowly try to convince her to live on without him.

It would definitely be a very sad and depressing scene.

Li XunHuan really hoped that it wouldn't come down to that. She had enough of a burden to carry in her heart already, another such load and her emotions would probably fall to pieces.

Although she was a very strong-willed person, her emotions were rather fragile.

Sun XiaoHong didn't do as he had thought, she didn't even walk over to say goodbye.

What was the reason?

Li XunHuan finally couldn't resist and turned around to look at her.

She hadn't fainted, nor had she moved from where she was standing.

But she was staring right at Li XunHuan.

Although the expression on her face was full of pain, the look in her eyes was still warm and resolute. Although she didn't say a word, her eyes were telling Li XunHuan, "Since this is something that you must do, then please just keep focused on doing it. Don't let me distract you, I understand and I won't try to stop you. Because I have complete faith in

you."

Although he only glanced at her for a moment, Li XunHuan suddenly felt a huge burden being alleviated.

Because he realized that she was an incredibly strong woman, that she would not make him worry about her. That even without him having to tell her, that she would try her best to live on.

She wanted only to be a comfort and an encouragement.

Li XunHuan couldn't express in words just how grateful he was, because only he understood just how much it meant that she was this understanding and supporting of him.

He suddenly realized that he was extremely lucky to have met her.

Li XunHuan finally started to leave. His steps were much more firm and resolute than when he came.

Sun XiaoHong watched quietly as he walked away. After a long while, she finally turned to look at Lin XianEr.

Lin XianEr was struggling to stand up from the muddy ground.

She tried her best to look proud and elegant, but she knew that whatever she did was useless. Because even she felt quite distressed and miserable.

Sun XiaoHong looked at her without a trace of emotion on her face.

Showing no emotion was a way of showing disdainful

emotions.

Lin XianEr laughed coldly and said, "I know that you're looking down on me right now, but I think that you're much worse than I am, do you know why?"

"No, I don't." Sun XiaoHong said.

"He killed your grandfather, and he's about to kill Li XunHuan, yet all you can do is stand there like a piece of wood." Lin XianEr said.

"And what should I be doing?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"You should ask yourself that ... don't tell me you don't even know what you're feeling in your own heart?" Lin XianEr said.

"I know." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Then you should be grieving, regretting, and in pain." Lin XianEr said.

"How do you know that I'm not in pain? When a person is grieving or in pain, that person doesn't have to show it with words but with actions." Sun XiaoHong said.

"And just what exactly have you shown? Just what exactly have you done?" Lin XianEr said.

"What can I do now?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Since you know that Li XunHuan is walking to his death right now, you should at least try to stop him ..." Lin XianEr said.

"You think that I can stop him?" Sun XiaoHong sighed and said, "If I were to do that, then his mind would just be in even more disarray, and he'd die even faster."

"But you ... you haven't even shed a single tear." Lin XianEr said.

Sun XiaoHong was quite for quite some time, before saying, "I really do want to start crying right now, start flooding my eyes with tears, but now is not the time."

"What are you waiting for?" Lin XianEr said.

"Tomorrow ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"But when tomorrow comes, there will be another tomorrow." Lin XianEr said.

"Because there will always be another tomorrow, there will always be hope." Sun XiaoHong said.

She slowly continued, "Although I've made a mistake, it's part of the past now and I'll just have to live with it. Even if I wanted to burst out in tears, it'll have to wait until tomorrow. Because there is something else that I must do today!"

Only fools cry about the past.

The courageous acknowledge their mistakes so that they will have the strength to deal with the present, instead of burying themselves in tears.

Tears cannot wipe away humiliation, nor can they correct the errors of the past. If you really want to right the wrongs that you've done, the only thing that you can do is dig up the courage to start all over again from today.

Lin XianEr froze still.

The whole reason why she said those things was to upset Sun XiaoHong. Because since Sun XiaoHong was looking down on her, she wanted Sun XiaoHong to look down on herself as well.

But she had failed.

Sun XiaoHong was much stronger and much more courageous than she could have ever expected.

Chapter 83: A Deep and Profound Love

After a while, Lin XianEr clenched her teeth and said, "What's so important that you have to do today?"

"When a woman wants to support her man, it doesn't necessarily mean that she has to accompany him in death, or that she has to die for him. But rather, she should console and comfort him, so that he may feel at ease to do what he has to do. She should make him feel important, so that he won't feel like he is being neglected." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Is that it?" Lin XianEr smirked.

"Other than that, what else can I possibly do for him?" Sun XiaoHong said.

She didn't have to do anything else.

That really was enough.

Any man who was lucky enough to have a woman like her would feel completely satisfied.

"I know that you're trying to upset me, but I don't blame you. Because I suddenly feel very sorry for you." Sun XiaoHong said.

"You feel sorry for me? What's there to feel sorry about?" Lin

XianEr said.

"You think that you're young, beautiful, and smart and you think that all the men in this world will slobber at your feet. That's why when you meet someone who truly loves and cares for you, you'll never be able to appreciate it. Instead you push him away and think that he is just an idiot. But one day you'll realize that the people who truly love you in this world are not many. True love can't be bought with youth and beauty." Sun XiaoHong said.

She softly continued, "And when that time comes, you'll realize that you have nothing, that your entire life is empty - when a woman reaches that point in her life, she is really someone to be pitied."

"You ... you think that I've reached that point?" Lin XianEr said.

Her voice was trembling, her entire body was trembling. Was she simply indignant? Cold? Or was she scared?

SUN XiaoHong didn't answer her. She just looked coldly at her pale and troubled face, at her mud-covered body. That was more devastating than any answer that she could give.

Lin XianEr suddenly let out a laugh and said, "You're right, I really did look down on him, and thought of him as nothing more than an idiot. But if I really were to go look for him right now, he would still come crawling back."

"Why don't you go and try?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"I don't have to try to know that there is no way that he can live without me." Lin XianEr said.

Although her mouth said that it she didn't need to try, her body had already turned around and walked away.

She was using all her strength and she ran incredibly fast, because she knew that this was her last chance. If she lost this chance, it would be all over for her. Sun XiaoHong stood silently for a few moments before turning her head away.

The land was covered in a vast black expanse. Out of the rainy mist, the figure of a person appeared ...

No one knew when that person had come, nor did anyone know how long that person had been here for.

The first thing that Sun XiaoHong noticed were her eyes.

Her eyes weren't very bright. Perhaps those were eyes had shed too many tears, so they appeared rather lackluster. But that quiet sense of sorrow and grief that she carried would bring even the most dispassionate of men to tears.

Then, she saw her face.

Her face wasn't that of an incredible beauty.

Her face was too pale, as if she hadn't seen the light of day for a very long time.

But for some reason, when Sun XiaoHong saw her, she felt that she had seen the most beautiful woman in the world.

Her hair was disheveled and her clothes were soaking wet, one would assume that she was in distress. However, the strange thing was that anyone who saw her wouldn't think that way.

She still looked very youthful, and very elegant.

Regardless of the situation, she touch anyone with her unique nature and her indomitable strength.

Sun XiaoHong had never seen this person before, but with just one glance she could guess who she was.

Lin ShiYin!

Only a woman such as her could make someone like Li XunHuan fall so deeply in love.

Sun XiaoHong let out a long sigh!

"Why does everyone think that Lin XianEr is the most beautiful woman in the world? She should be the most beautiful woman in the world. Not even considering when she was still young, even now, she is much stronger than Lin XianEr will ever be."

Perhaps it was the rainy night, or perhaps it was because she was a woman, but that was what she thought.

A woman's taste in woman is different from a man's taste.

Lin ShiYin was looking at her as well, she walked over slowly and said, "You ... you're Miss Sun, right?"

Sun XiaoHong nodded her head and said, "I know who you are, I've heard him talk about you before."

Lin ShiYin let out a smile, a very sorrowful smile.

Of course she knew which 'him' Sun XiaoHong was referring to.

"So you've been here for quite a while." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin ShiYin lowered her head and said, "I heard that he was going to have a duel here and I just wanted to say a few words to him. But I haven't left the house for quite some time and I had gotten lost along the way."

She let out a slight smile and continued, "But that's okay, what I originally wanted to tell him I can tell you instead."

Her voice sounded very soft and fragile. It seemed like she needed to think for quite some time before every word.

Every word she said was clear and insipid. Anyone who listened to her talk would think that she was a rather indifferent and heartless woman.

But Sun XiaoHong understood her very well. Her words sounded cold and heartless because she was someone who had suffered and endured much pain in her life.

Sun XiaoHong felt nothing but sympathy and compassion in her heart, she couldn't help but ask, "I know that he has always wanted to see you, since you've come all the way here, why don't you follow him to see him one more time?"

"I ... I can't." Lin ShiYin said.

She had originally wanted to see Li XunHuan, but when she arrived, there was already someone by his side. She didn't want to show up because she was afraid of the feelings that would arise if she saw him.

Because she knew that if she was to see Li XunHuan again, she wouldn't be able to control herself any longer.

Even though she didn't say any of this, Sun XiaoHong understood her very well.

"I never used to understand why some people listen blindly to the words of others, and let others change their destiny. Only now do I understand that you listen to someone else not because you fear him, but because you love him, and you know that everything that he does is for you." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin ShiYin was trying to control herself the entire time, but now she just couldn't hold it in any longer.

Tears started to stream down her cheeks.

Because every word that Sun XiaoHong spoke went straight to her heart. Every word was like a needle, piercing deep into her soul.

She had once asked herself, "I don't have anything anymore, I feel completely empty, exactly the same as Lin XianEr, but whose fault was this? Could it be that I have been mistaken in the past?"

She used to despise Li XunHuan, she used to hate him.

Such a wretched and sorrowful ending, was it all because of Li XunHuan?

But only now did she realize that the one who was wrong was not Li XunHuan, but herself.

"Why did I listen to him back then? Why didn't I just tell him straight to his face that I loved him, and that I wouldn't marry anyone but him."

Sun XiaoHong said softly, "I'm not too sure about what exactly happened between the two of you, but I know that ..."

Lin ShiYin suddenly interrupted her and said, "But now I know, now that I've seen you, I know that I was wrong."

"Why is that?" Sun XiaoHong exclaimed.

"Because ... if I had been as courageous as you, as strong and resolute as you, then it wouldn't have ended up this way."

"But you ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"I know now that I was never worthy enough to be his wife, only you're good enough for him." Lin ShiYin said.

Sun XiaoHong lowered her head and said, "I ..."

Lin ShiYin didn't let her speak and continued, "Because only you can comfort him and support him. No matter what he does, your faith in him will never change. But I ..."

She sighed quietly as tears rolled down her cheeks.

Sun XiaoHong was quiet for quite some time. She suddenly smiled and said, "But in the future, you'll have many chances to see him. Whatever happened in the past is behind you, but now the two of you can ..."

Lin ShiYin suddenly cut her off and said, "You think that he still has a chance? That there is hope?"

"Of course there is!" Sun XiaoHong said.

She smiled and said, "Anyone else would think that he has lost all faith in himself. If someone doesn't even believe in himself anymore, then what hope is there?"

"That's true." Lin ShiYin said.

"But I know that he is acting this way only to lure ShangGuan JinHong into letting his guard down. Once ShangGuan JinHong takes his enemy too lightly, then he will start being careless." Sun XiaoHong said.

Her eyes flashed brightly, "And once ShangGuan JinHong is careless, then he will be able to take his life!"

Lin ShiYin let out a sigh and said, "He has so much confidence in himself because you believe in him so much. Your support and encouragement is extremely important to him, I don't even think you realize just how important you are."

Sun XiaoHong lowered her head and smiled, "I do realize."

Not only was she confident in Li XunHuan, she was very confident in herself as well.

Lin ShiYin looked at her and felt an indescribable feeling in her heart. Was it envy? Jealousy? Or was it self-pity? Perhaps, it was just that she was really happy for him.

Li XunHuan had been down for half his life, his heart must be extremely tired. Only someone like Sun XiaoHong could possibly comfort him. Even if he were to win this time, there would definitely come a time when he would fall again.

Even if no one was able to strike him down, he would

undoubtedly strike himself down!

Lin ShiYin sighed and said, "That he was able to meet you, really is the work of the heavens repaying him for all his suffering. He deserves to be happy, but ..."

She suddenly asked, "What about Jing WuMing? Even if he can defeat ShangGuan JinHong, there is no way that he can withstand an attack from the two of them."

"Jing WuMing might not even attack. Since ShangGuan JinHong believes that there is no way that he will lose, he won't even ask for Jing WuMing's help. But by then, even if Jing WuMing wanted to attack, it would be too late." Sun XiaoHong said.

She was entirely correct. That was Li XunHuan's one and only chance.

If they wanted to defeat Li XunHuan, they only had one chance as well - his flying dagger would never give anyone a second chance.

The question was who would be able to take advantage of that one chance.

"So what you're saying is, that if Jing WuMing doesn't attack, then he will have a chance?" Lin ShiYin said.

"Right." Sun XiaoHong said.

"How can you be certain that Jing WuMing will not attack?" Lin ShiYin said.

"I'm not." Sun XiaoHong said, "But what I am certain of is that after two hours, none of them will make a move."

"But even if you are right, how do we know that something will happen within these two hours?" Lin ShiYin said.

"Something will." Sun XiaoHong said.

"What?" Lin ShiYin asked.

"Ah Fei." Sun XiaoHong replied.

Although Lin ShiYin didn't say a word, the look on her face was that of disappointment.

Everyone couldn't help but feel disappointed towards Ah Fei.

"Although no one has confidence in him anymore, that is only because he wears heavy shackles on his body." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Shackles?" Lin ShiYin said.

"Yes, shackles. And only one person can release him from those shackles." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Who?" Lin ShiYin said.

"You need the bell-ringer to unfasten the bell." Sun XiaoHong said.

"You mean ... Lin XianEr?" Lin ShiYin said.

"Exactly, when he finally realizes that Lin XianEr is not worth his love, then he will be free of his shackles." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin ShiYin paused for a while and then said, "You may be

right. But he has fallen for so long, can he really get back up within such a short amount of time?"

"For any other reason, he probably can't. But for Li XunHuan, he definitely can." Sun XiaoHong said.

She slowly added, "For the people who we care about, we can sometimes do things that we're normally not capable of."

Lin ShiYin let out a long sigh and said, "So that is the case ..."

"So now I must look for Ah Fei and tell him everything that has happened." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Wait .. there is something else that I must tell you." Lin ShiYin said.

"What is it?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"I haven't been to the outside world for quite some time, yet I know so much about everything that has happened. Don't you find this strange?" Lin ShiYin said.

"Not at all, because I know that you have a very intelligent son." Sun XiaoHong said with a smile.

Lin ShiYin lowered her head and said, "No matter what happens, he will always be my son. I don't have anything in this world except for him ... that's why I hoped that you could tell him for me, to forgive him ..."

"He has never hated anyone, you should know that." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin ShiYin was quiet for a long while, as if there was something that she wanted to say, but just didn't know how to say it.

"Is it about the 'LianHua Compendium'?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

Lin ShiYin sounded quiet startled and said, "You know about this?"

Sun XiaoHong smiled and said, "I was the one who told him in the first place, my second uncle ..."

"Right, when Master Wang came, Mr. Sun was also there." Lin ShiYin said.

"Then that manual really was in your possession?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"It was, but I haven't told him about it this entire time." Lin ShiYin said.

"Why is that?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

"Because at that time I felt that martial arts was of no benefit to him, that it would harm him instead. The greater his martial arts were, the more troubles that were bound to arise, so ..." Lin ShiYin said.

"So you've kept it from him the entire time, because you just wanted him to be a normal person, and lead a normal life." Sun XiaoHong said.

"That was my biggest reason, no one else would ever believe me ..." Lin ShiYin said sullenly.

"I believe you." Sun XiaoHong said.

She sighed and said, "If I were you, I'm afraid that I would've done the exact same thing."

Only a woman could understand how another women felt.

Only another woman could understand how a woman was capable of doing anything for the man she loved. In the eyes of others, her actions would appear foolish, but in their eyes, no reason was more important in the entire world.

"But I really regret it now, I really shouldn't have kept it from him." Lin ShiYin said.

"You only kept it from him for his sake." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Because ... if he had studied the contents of the 'LianHua Compendium', even if ShangGuan JinHong and Jing WuMing were to team up on him, they still wouldn't be a match for him." Lin ShiYin said.

"So that's why you feel guilty, that's why you want him to forgive you." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin ShiYin nodded her head and said, "I know that he won't blame me for it, but if I .. I don't let him know about this, I just won't be able to live with myself."

"But you're wrong." Sun XiaoHong said.

"I'm wrong?" Lin ShiYin said.

"If he had studied the 'LianHua Compendium', he still wouldn't be a match for ShangGuan JinHong." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Why is that?" Lin ShiYin said.

"Do you know why Ah Fei's sword is so fearsome?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Because he ..." Lin ShiYin said.

"He is fast, because he is so devoted, much more than anyone else. It is the same for Li XunHuan. If he had learned any other martial arts, then he would lose that focus. He probably wouldn't be as fast." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin ShiYin lowered her head and said, "No matter what the case, I only hope that you will relay my feelings to him."

"You two will have a chance to see each other very soon, why don't you just tell him then?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Chapter 84: A Sudden Revelation

Lin ShiYin fell silent for quite some time, then she lifted her head.

The expression on her face had suddenly become very peaceful, "There won't be any chance that we'll see each other in the future again."

Sun XiaoHong knotted her brows and said, "Why?"

"Because ... because I am leaving for a very far away place." Lin ShiYin said.

"You ... do you have to go?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"I must!" Lin ShiYin said.

"But why?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"I've already made up my mind." Lin ShiYin said.

Sun XiaoHong couldn't say anything to that.

Lin ShiYin smiled and said, "My biggest weakness has always been my indecision. This might be the first time that I've ever made up my mind. I just hope that no one will try to convince me otherwise."

"But ... but this is the first time that we've met. You should at

least let me see you again, there's still so much that I want to talk to you about." Sun XiaoHong said.

Lin ShiYin thought for a while and said, "Very well. I will see you here again tomorrow, in the early morning."

And with that, Lin ShiYin left.

It felt as if Sun XiaoHong was the only person left in the entire world.

She hadn't shed a single tear the entire time, but now her eyes started to water.

She had also made up her mind.

As long as Li XunHuan survived, she would bring him here.

Since the first time that she met Li XunHuan, she had decided that she would devote her entire life to him.

She has never wavered from that decision.

But now, she felt that she had been too selfish. So she decided that she would sacrifice her own happiness!

Because she felt that Lin ShiYin needed him much more than she did!

"The two of them have suffered too much already, they have every right to be happy. No matter what I will try my best to bring the two of them back together."

"She had always been his, no one should ever separate them."

"Long Xiao4Yun can't, he was never good enough for her!"

"But I ..."

She made up her mind to not think about herself. She bit down on her lips, wiped away her tears, and said to herself, "Even if I want to cry, it'll have to wait until tomorrow. There is still much for me to do today ..."

She lifted her head.

Everything was pitch black, it was deep into the night.

But if the dark night is upon us, the bright light of day can't be far away.

There are some who say that there are only two kinds of people in this world: good and evil.

Lin XianEr could definitely be classified as the evil type, but what about Lin ShiYin and Sun XiaoHong?

Although they were definitely good people, the two of them were very different.

When problems or hardships arose, Lin ShiYin would just endure, and endure ...

She felt that a woman's greatest virtue was to endure!

But Sun XiaoHong was different. She would always resist!

As long as she felt strongly against something, she would fight it!

She was resolute, smart, brave, and full of confidence. She

was never afraid to love, nor to hate. And if you were to search her entire being, you would never find a single dark or gloomy spot.

It's because of people like her that there is humanity in this world, that it unyieldingly progresses.

"The women in this world guide the future of the human race."

This saying definitely applied to her.

"As long as I go look for him again, no matter what, he will still come crawling back to me."

"Without me, there's no way that he can live on."

Was Lin XianEr really that confident?

She had every right to be, she knew that Ah Fei was madly in love with her.

But where was Ah Fei right now?

"He must still be in that little house, because that house was 'our home'. My belongings are still there, my essence is still in that house."

"He must be there waiting for me to return."

Lin XianEr suddenly felt much more relaxed.

"He probably hasn't been doing anything these past two days except drinking wine. He's probably made a big mess

out of the house by now. He probably hasn't even moved those corpses yet."

When she thought of this, Lin XianEr didn't dare to furrow her eyebrows.

"But no matter, once I see him, he'll be dying to do anything I ask of him. I needn't lift a finger at all."

Lin XianEr let out a sigh of relief. When a woman like her hits rock bottom, but there's still a place that she can escape to, a person patiently waiting there for her to come back, she felt incredibly overjoyed.

"I really have been too cruel to him in the past, I was really pushing him over the edge. I'm going to have to treat him differently from now on."

"Men are like little children. If you want them to behave, you have to give them their candy."

She suddenly felt extremely warm inside her heart.

"Come to think of it, he really isn't a very dislikeable or annoying person. He's probably much better than most of the men I've met in my life."

Lin XianEr came to the realization that she did feel a certain amount of love towards Ah Fei.

If there was anyone in her life who she sincerely had feelings for, it would be Ah Fei. The more she thought about it, the more she realized how lucky she was when Ah Fei was by her side.

"I really should treat him better from now on. Men like him

are extremely rare in this world, I'm afraid I may never find another one like him."

And the more she thought about it, the more she realized that she must not let go of him.

Perhaps she had always been in love with him, and it was just that he was so much more in love with her that she took everything for granted.

If he wasn't so deeply in love with her, perhaps she would've wanted him more back then.

This is one of our weaknesses, one of the contradictions of human nature.

That is why smart men never show their feelings towards the women they love, instead they keep it all inside.

"Ah Fei, please don't worry. From now on I will never hurt you again, and I will stay by your side each and every day. Let's forget all about the past and start over again."

"Just as long as you treat me as you did in the past, I will listen to your every word from now on."

But would Ah Fei still treat her the same as before?

Lin XianEr wasn't so sure of herself anymore, her confidence was slowly waning.

She had never felt like this before, because she had never realized how important Ah Fei was to her. She didn't even want to care whether Ah Fei would treat her well or not anymore.

Only when a person really wants to obtain something will that person be afraid of losing it.

This constant desire and dissatisfaction is one of the many weaknesses of humans.

The sad thing is, the more you desire something, the greater your dissatisfaction may ultimately be.

Lin XianEr lifted her head and saw the desolate house alongside the small road.

There were lights inside the house.

She stopped in place and tore off a piece of her sleeve and washed her face in the rain. Then she gently combed through her hair with her fingertips.

She didn't want Ah Fei to see her in such miserable state.

Because she really couldn't afford to lose him again.

The lights were very bright inside the house.

A candle was set on the table.

There was a large pot of porridge next to the candle.

The house wasn't as dirty or messy as Lin XianEr had imagined. The corpses were nowhere in sight, the blood stains had been washed away, everything was spotlessly clean.

Ah Fei sat next to the table, slowly sipping on a bowl of porridge.

He always ate very slowly because he knew that food shouldn't be taken for granted. That's why he ate slowly to savor each and every bite.

But he didn't really seem like he was enjoying himself much right now.

He had a bitter expression on his face as if he was forcing himself to eat.

Why did he have to force himself to eat? Was it because he was simply trying to stay alive?

It was late into the night.

A single person sat facing a lonely candle, slowly sipping on porridge.

If you never saw it for yourself, you wouldn't realize how sad and lonely this scene was.

The door slowly swung open.

Lin XianEr stood in the doorway looking at him.

The instant that she saw Ah Fei, she felt an incredible warmth flood through her entire body.

She didn't even know herself that she was capable of feeling this way.

Because her blood had always been cold.

Ah Fei didn't notice that someone had come into the house. His head was still lowered slowly sipping on that bowl of porridge. The porridge seemed like the only thing that was

relevant in the entire world.

But the muscles in her face looked like like they had stiffened.

Lin XianEr couldn't help but call out softly, "Little Fei ..."

Her voice was still as soft and sweet as ever.

Ah Fei finally started to lift his head and looked at her.

His eyes were still very bright, was it because of tears?

Lin XianEr seemed a little teary-eyed as well, "Little Fei, I've returned ..."

Ah Fei didn't move, nor did he speak.

He looked like he had been frozen still and was unable to move at all.

She slowly walked towards him and said, "I knew that you would be waiting for me, because I've finally realized that you're the only one who is truly good to me in this world."

She didn't use any tricks this time.

She actually spoke from the heart. Her feelings for Ah Fei were real.

"I see now that everyone else was just using me ... and that I was just using them as well. I really never minded that they were just using me. But no matter how bad I treated you, you were still always true to me." Lin XianEr said.

She didn't notice the change on Ah Fei's face.

Because she was getting closer and closer to him, so close that she didn't see clearly what she should have been seeing.

"I've decided that I'm never going to deceive you ever again, and that I won't hurt you ever again. No matter what it is that you want, I will listen, and I will promise ..." Lin XianEr said.

PENG, the chopsticks in Ah Fei's hands suddenly snapped.

Lin XianEr took his hand and placed it on top of her chest.

Her voice was sweeter than honey.

"I really have wronged you in the past. I will try my best to make it up to you in the future. I want you to feel that no matter how well you treat me, that it was all worth it in the end." Lin XianEr said.

Her chest was warm and soft.

Anyone who put their hands on her chest would not be able to take it off.

But Ah Fei suddenly pulled his hand away.

A wave of shock suddenly shot through her eyes, "You ... you ... don't want me anymore?"

Ah Fei just looked at her silently, as if it was the very first time that he had ever seen her.

"Everything I've said to you is the truth. Although I've been with other men in the past ... I've never felt anything for any

of them before, it was all fake ..."

Her voice suddenly stopped, because she finally saw the look on Ah Fei's face.

Ah Fei looked like he wanted to vomit.

Lin XianEr took two steps backwards and said, "You ... you don't like it when I tell the truth? Would you rather me lie to you again?"

Ah Fei looked straight at her for a long while and then said, "There's one thing that I find very strange."

"What?" Lin XianEr said.

Ah Fei slowly stood up and said slowly and clearly, "How I ever fell in love with a woman like you!"

Lin XianEr felt her entire body freeze still.

Ah Fei didn't say another word.

He didn't have to say anything else, that one sentence was enough.

That one sentence was enough to send Lin XianEr into the bottomless abyss.

Ah Fei slowly walked out.

A person who suffers an innumerable amount of pain, insult and ridicule definitely will not just keep taking it.

A person can tolerate lies, but a person can only tolerate so much insult - that is the case for women, and it is the same

for men.

It is the same for a wife, and the same for a husband.

Lin XianEr just felt her heart sinking, and sinking ...

Ah Fei had already opened the door.

Lin XianEr suddenly turned around and threw herself at his feet, she pulled at his sleeves and said sobbingly, "How can you just leave me like this ... you're all I have left now ..."

But Ah Fei did not turn around.

He slowly took off the shirt that she was pulling onto.

He walked out barechested into the rain.

The rain was very cold.

But the rain was very clean.

He had finally let go of Lin XianEr, he had finally freed himself of the shackles that held his heart. It was like he had finally thrown away an old and worn out shirt.

Lin XianEr was still clenching firmly onto that shirt, because she knew that there really was nothing else that she could hold onto.

"In the end you'll realize that you have nothing, and that your life is completely empty ..."

Her tears started to flow.

At that point she finally realized that she had been in love

with Ah Fei all along.

Perhaps she tormented him because she loved him, and because she knew that he loved her.

"Why do women choose to torment the men that they loved most?"

She only realized now just how important Ah Fei was to her.

Because now, she had lost him.

"Why do women take things so lightly, only realizing how important they are when they've lost it?"

Perhaps men are like this as well.

Lin XianEr started laughing madly as she tore Ah Fei's shirt to pieces.

"What am I afraid of, I'm still young and beautiful - as long as I want I can have as many men as I want ... I can have ten different men a day."

She was laughing, but her laughter was more sorrowful than tears.

Because she knew that although men were easy to come by, 'true love' could not be bought with beauty and youth.

What was Lin XianEr's fate?

Nobody knows.

She seemingly disappeared from this world.

Two, three years later in ChangAn's most famous brothel, there appeared an extremely unique prostitute. She didn't ask for money, all she wanted was men.

Rumors say that she serviced at least ten men a day.

At first a lot of men were very interested in her, but as time passed the men that came to her were less and less.

It wasn't simply because she aged very quickly, but because people slowly realized that she wasn't human. She was a mother wolf that devoured men whole.

Not only did she enjoy breaking her men, the torture that she inflicted upon herself was even more vicious.

Some people claimed that she was once 'the most beautiful woman in the world', Lin XianEr.

But she herself never admitted to it.

Several years later, in one of the most rundown slums in ChangAn, there appeared another peculiar woman who had become rather famous.

She was famous not because of her beauty, but because of her ugliness, her unbelievable ugliness.

The funny part was that when she was drunk she would often proclaim that she was 'the most beautiful woman in the world'.

Of course no one believed her.

The rain was freezing cold.

Although the cold rain soaked Ah Fei from head to toe, he felt extremely refreshed. Because that cold rain made him realize that he wasn't a piece of dead lumber. It was the first time in two years that he felt so alive.

In addition, he felt very relieved, as if a huge weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

There was someone calling out to him in the distance, "Ah Fei ..."

The voice was very low, he probably wouldn't have heard it a couple of days ago.

But now, his eyes were no longer blind, and his ears were no longer deaf.

He stopped and asked, "Who is it?"

A person rushed over towards him, two long pigtails, one big pair of eyes.

It was a beautiful young girl, she looked slightly beat up and tired.

Sun XiaoHong had finally found him.

She ran up to his face and said, panting, "You don't recognize me anymore ..."

Ah Fei interrupted her and said, "I remember you, I saw you once two years ago. You were really good at talking. I also

saw you two days ago, but you didn't say a word."

Sun XiaoHong smiled and said, "It looks like your memory is pretty good."

Her heart felt very relieved, because she noticed that Ah Fei was standing, and he was standing very tall.

"Some people can still get up no matter how many times they've been knocked down."

Li XunHuan and Ah Fei really were kindred spirits, she thought to herself.

He knew what she would ask.

But she didn't say anything, she just didn't know how to put it.

"Feel free to say anything you want, because you are Li XunHuan's friend." Ah Fei said.

"Have you seen her?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Yes." Ah Fei said.

"Where is she?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"She has nothing to do with me, why would you ask me for?" Ah Fei said.

In the past, whenever somebody would bring up Lin XianEr, he would always feel an indescribable giddiness, even her name had a strange hold on him.

But now he seemed very calm.

Sun XiaoHong stared at him and then let out a sigh of relief, "So you really have escaped from your shackles."

"My shackles?" Ah Fei said.

"Everyone has their own cage and shackles, but only a few people in this world can free themselves from them." Sun XiaoHong said.

"I don't understand." Ah Fei said.

"You don't have to understand, just as long as you can do it." Sun XiaoHong said.

Ah Fei was quiet for a long while and then said, "I understand now."

"You really do understand? ... Then let me ask you, how did you free yourself from those shackles?"

Ah Fei paused for a long time, then smiled and said, "I had a sudden revelation."

'A sudden revelation', although this sounded very simple, to do so in actuality was quite hard.

When the Buddha achieved Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, he had a sudden revelation as well.

Bodhidharma meditated for nine years before he had a sudden revelation.

Whatever the case was, when you had a sudden revelation, your mind will be freed from its troubles. But before reaching that point, your mind was bound to experience countless

trials and adversity.

"You must have suffered greatly before you had come to your revelation." Sun XiaoHong said.

Ah Fei didn't seem to want to talk about that anymore and suddenly asked, "Did he tell you to come look for me?"

"No." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Where is he?" Ah Fei said.

Sun XiaoHong fell silent. Her smile disappeared as well.

"How is he right now?" Ah Fei asked urgently.

Sun XiaoHong's expression sunk as she said, "Honestly speaking, I have no idea where he is right now, and I have no idea whether he is dead or alive either ..."

Ah Fei's face changed colors, "What do you mean by that?"

"I know that I can probably find him, but his life ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"What about his life?" Ah Fei said.

Sun XiaoHong looked at him and said, "His life and death rests solely in your hands!"

Chapter 85: Who Was At Fault?

It was raining outside but completely dry inside the house. There was a single small window that was very high up from the ground.

That window was always closed. Sunlight rarely shined through and rain never poured in.

The walls were coated with paint so thick and white that no one could tell whether the walls were made of earth and clay or iron and metal. But one thing that was very apparent was that these walls were extremely thick, thick enough to border off the world outside.

Besides two beds and a large table, there was nothing else in that house. No chairs or stools, not even a single cup could be found.

The house and its surroundings seemed more frugal and ascetic than the abode of a monk.

Who could have ever guessed that the wealthiest, most influential, and most powerful person in the pugilistic world, Chief ShangGuan JinHong actually lived in a place like this?

But Li XunHuan couldn't bother to be surprised.

ShangGuan JinHong stood right next to him and said, "Is this

place satisfactory?"

"At least it is dry." Li XunHuan said with a forced smile.

"It is indeed very dry. I can guarantee that you won't even find a single drop of water here." ShangGuan JinHong said, "Tea, wine, and water has never been served here before. Not even a single tear has ever been shed here."

"What about blood? Has anyone ever bled here before?" Li XunHuan said.

"Never - even if somebody wanted to die in this place, they would've bled themselves dry before ever reaching the door." ShangGuan JinHong said, "If I didn't want someone entering this house, whether they're dead or alive, there's no way that they would ever get in."

Li XunHuan let out a slight laugh and said, "Honestly speaking, living in a place like this can't be comfortable at all. But dying here wouldn't be that bad."

"Oh?" ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Because this place is like a grave anyway." Li XunHuan said.

"Since it is to your liking, I will bury you right here." ShangGuan JinHong said with a sadistic smile on his face. He pointed to the ground with his foot and continued, "I will bury you right under here so that when I stand on top of this spot everyday knowing that Li TanHua is under my foot, I will feel very refreshed."

"Refreshed?" Li XunHuan asked with a furrowed brow.

"Because if I don't stay refreshed, I might wind up under

someone else's foot. But once I remember your situation, I'll be reminded to stay alert." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"But if a person is alert and refreshed for too long, it will undoubtedly bring about pain." Li XunHuan said.

"I've never felt a single ounce of pain. Never in my entire life." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"This is because you've never been happy before either ... I really wonder sometimes, just what exactly are you living for?" Li XunHuan said.

ShangGuan JinHong's eyes flickered as he looked deep in thought, after a while he responded, "Some people really have no idea what they're living for. But even worse are those who don't even know what they will have died for."

"Hmm?" Li XunHuan said.

ShangGuan JinHong looked at him and said, "Such as you, you won't have any idea what you died for."

"Actually, I never really wanted to know in the first place." Li XunHuan said.

"You don't." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Because I've already realized that death isn't that big of a deal." Li XunHuan said.

He didn't wait for ShangGuan JinHong's reponse and continued, "In your eyes, I'm already a dead person anyway, right?"

"You really do know yourself well." ShangGuan JinHong said.

"Since my death cannot be avoided, why bother letting anything bother or worry me?" Li XunHuan said.

He suddenly sat down on the ground and sprawled himself out comfortably. With a smile, he said, "If I wanted to sit right now, I can sit, and if I wanted to close my eyes, I could close my eyes. Can you do the same?"

ShangGuan JinHong clenched his fists.

"Of course you can't because you still have lots to worry about, you still have to be wary of me." Li XunHuan said.

"At the very least, I am much more comfortable than you right now." Li XunHuan said.

ShangGuan JinHong smiled and said, "Since I promised not to let you die all all damp and wet, I had planned to make a move once your clothes had dried. But I've changed my mind now."

"Oh?" Li XunHuan said.

"Not only am I going to give you a fresh set of clothes, I'm also going to give you a jar of wine. Because the words you speak are a real pleasure to my ears, to be able to hear such words coming from a dead person really delights me." ShangGuan JinHong said.

Long Xiao3Yun laid curled up in a bed fast asleep. There were several damp and muddy footprints on the floor.

A lamp was lit but the dim light made the inn look even

gloomier and completely devoid of life.

Lin ShiYin slowly opened the door and walked inside.

A mother's footsteps were always light. She would rather not sleep the entire night than risk waking up her child from a peaceful slumber.

But Long Xiao3Yun was no longer a child anymore, he was more worldly and mature than most people in the world. But when he was sleeping he still looked like an innocent child.

His face was still so young, so pale, and so thin. No matter what he had done, he was still just a lonely, helpless little child, still confused and bewildered by the large world around him.

Lin ShiYin walked up to the bed and stared at him intently, she felt a certain bitterness in her heart.

This was her only child, her own flesh and blood, her only comfort in this world.

In the past she would have rather died than to ever part with him.

But now ...

Lin ShiYin lifted up her lamp and kept turning back to look at him.

"I just want to look at him a little longer, just a little longer, because in the future ..."

She was afraid to think about the future, she didn't want to think about the future.

Tears erupted from her soft eyes.

Even though Long Xiao3Yun's eyes were shut very tightly, tears started to flow as well.

His body started to shake. Was it because of the cold? Or was he having a nightmare?

Lin ShiYin bent over and wanted to tuck him under his covers tightly.

She suddenly realized that the blanket was wet, Long Xiao3Yun's clothes were soaked as well.

Lin ShiYin was slightly startled but after settling down, she said, "So you have went out as well."

Long Xiao3Yun's eyes and mouth were still shut very tightly.

"Were you following behind me the entire time?" Lin ShiYin asked.

Long Xiao3Yun finally nodded his head.

"So you heard everything I said before?" Lin ShiYin asked.

Long Xiao3Yun suddenly took out an oilpaper wrapped package from under the covers and said loudly, "Take it."

Lin ShiYin knitted her brow and replied, "What is this?"

"You really don't know what this is? Didn't you decide to come back just to get this?" Long Xiao3Yun said.

A look of sadness swept over Lin ShiYin as she said, "I ... I

came back to see you."

"If it wasn't for this, would you have still come back to see me?" Long Xiao3Yun said.

He suddenly opened his eyes and stared at his mother.

A look of sadness swept over Long Xiao3Yun as well as he said, "You've already decided to leave me, if it weren't for this, you would have left a long time ago."

"You're right, I have decided to go to a far away place. But I ..." Lin ShiYin said.

Long Xiao3Yun cut her off and said, "You don't even have to tell me, I know where you're planning to go."

"You know?" Lin ShiYin said.

"You're going to save Li XunHuan right?" Long Xiao3Yun said.

Lin ShiYin was startled again.

"You're preparing to use this 'LianHua Compendium' to go save Li XunHuan aren't you?" Long Xiao3Yun said.

He held the package in front of him and said, "So why haven't you taken it yet? Why haven't you left yet?"

Lin ShiYin's body started to waver back and forth as if she could no longer support herself up.

"Once you show this 'LianHua Compendium', ShangGuan JinHong will definitely come to see you, because he is also a practitioner of the martial arts, he wouldn't be able to resist

his curiosity." Long Xiao3Yun said.

He gnawed on his teeth and said, "You're planning on using this opportunity to save him, because you know that dealing with ShangGuan JinHong won't be an easy task. So your whole goal is to stall him with this for as long as possible so that Li XunHuan can live on just a little longer, and so that Ah Fei with have just a little longer to rush to his aid."

Lin ShiYin had nothing to say.

Long Xiao3Yun was indeed a smart child, his every word mirrored her every thought.

So now she was left speechless.

"Li XunHuan really is good to you. Such that even if you were to throw away your own child, and even your own life for him, no one could say that you were wrong to do so." Long Xiao3Yun said.

He started to tremble even more as he continued, "But have you ever thought about anyone else? Have you ever thought about me? I'm your SON ... I ... I ..."

Lin ShiYin felt as if her heart was being pierced by needles. She couldn't help but take her son's hand and said, "Of course I've thought about you. I ..."

Long Xiao3Yun pushed her away forcefully and shouted, "Of course you've thought about me, you want me to go with you to meet with them tomorrow morning right? Seeing as to how you're going to throw your life away for them, of course they're going to treat very well and take care of me."

He continued, "But how do you know that you can definitely

save him? If you were to die in front of him, he'd be in even more disarray. And even if Ah Fei could rush there to save him in time, he probably wouldn't last until then."

Lin ShiYin started to tremble as well.

"And even if he was able to survive, and even if he was willing to take care of me, there's still no way that I would follow him, I don't even want to lay my eyes on him!" Long Xiao3Yun said.

"Why?" Lin ShiYin asked.

"Because I hate him!" Long Xiao3Yun said.

"But you've already learned ..." Lin ShiYin said.

Long Xiao3Yun cut her off and said, "I don't hate him for destroying my martial arts."

"Then why do you hate him for?" Lin ShiYin said.

"I hate him for not being my father, why couldn't he have been MY father! Why couldn't I have been his son? If he was my father, he would have never left me, everything would have been so much better!" Long Xiao3Yun said.

He suddenly fell to the floor and started crying his eyes out.

Lin ShiYin's heart shattered, her entire body fell to pieces.

She felt as if she couldn't stand up anymore and she fell down onto a chair that was behind her.

"If only this child were his son, if only he were my husband ..."

She had never even dared to entertain that thought, but deep down inside her heart, how could she not have secretly craved for it?

The child of an unhappy couple will only be even more unhappy and suffer even more pain.

But fault lies only with the parents, not with the child. Why did he have to follow them in enduring punishment and suffering?

Lin ShiYin pulled herself up and walked over beside her son. Tears rained down as she said, "Son, I have really wronged you ... I have really wronged you ... With parents like us, it must have been extremely difficult being our son ..."

A sad and decrepit voice suddenly rang from outside the window.

"You have done nothing wrong. I am the one who is at fault."

Long Xiao4Yun.

No one would have ever guessed that he would ever look so distressed and worn out.

He stood at the door, scared to even take a step inside.

Long Xiao3Yun lifted his head and his lips moved as if he were about to call out, "Father."

But not a single sound came out!

Long Xiao4Yun sighed and said, "I know that you're not even willing to accept me as your father."

He turned to Lin ShiYin and said, "And I know that you're not willing to accept me as your husband. My life really is pointless."

"You ..." Lin ShiYin said.

He didn't let her continue and said, "But I have always tried my hardest to be a good father, and to be a good husband. But it looks like I've failed, it looks like I've done everything wrong."

Lin ShiYin stared at him.

He had always been a solemn and strict man, always full of vigor and energy.

But what about now?

Feelings of pity suddenly rushed through her as she said, "I've wronged you as well. I haven't been a very good wife at all."

Long Xiao4Yun let out a laugh, a very sorrowful laugh, and said, "That's not your fault, everything really is my fault. If I had never met you, if I had never met Li XunHuan, everything wouldn't have turned out like this. Everyone would have been happy and prosperous."

Was his own fate completely changed by that incident?

If he had never met Li XunHuan, would he have never turned out the way he did?

Lin ShiYin started to weep as she said, "Regardless of what you've done, it was all for the sake of protecting this family,

it was all for the sake of protecting your wife. So ... you really weren't at fault. There's no way that I can blame you."

"But if both of us are not at fault, then who was at fault?" Long Xiao4Yun said.

Lin ShiYin stared out the window into the rainy night. "Who was at fault ... ? Who was at fault ... ?"

She didn't have an answer.

No one had an answer.

There are some things in this world which humans will never understand and will never have an answer for.

"I originally didn't plan on seeing you two again. Since you had left this time, I had figured that you were leaving me for good. That is why I didn't want to bother to urge or beg you to stay, because ..." Long Xiao4Yun said.

He let out a long sigh as tears started to fall, "I know that the things I have done not only have hurt you, but have disappointed you as well. But I just couldn't help but follow the two of you. Even if it was just to glance an eye at you from a distance, I was satisfied."

Lin ShiYin burst into tears and cried, "Please, don't say anymore ... please ..."

Long Xiao4Yun nodded his head and said, "I really shouldn't say anymore, because anything I say right now is already too late."

"You know that I owe him too much, I can't just watch as he dies." Lin ShiYin said.

"I owe him too, I owe him much more. That's why there are things that you should let me do instead." Long Xiao4Yun said.

It seemed as if he had made up his mind as he strode over.

"What ... what do you want to do? Don't tell me ..." Lin ShiYin said.

Long Xiao4Yun suddenly sealed her pressure points. "You can't die, you shouldn't die, I'm the one who should die. The longer I live, the more that everyone will suffer. If I died instead, all of you will be much better off."

He grabbed the 'LianHua Compendium' and rushed out of the door.

In the distance, his voice could be heard shouting, "Son, take good care of your mother. As for this no good father of yours ... it really doesn't matter whether or not you will accept me."

Long Xiao3Yun's eyes were wide opened as he stared out into the rain.

He was no longer crying.

But the look in his eyes was even more depressing than tears.

After who knows how long, he suddenly shouted out loud, "I accept you, you're the only one who can be my father! And you're the only one I'd ever accept as my father! Other than you, there's no one else, no one else ..."

This was the remorse shown from a child to his father. It was a bond that was shared between a father and a son, something that nothing in the world could replace.

It is a pity that the father will never hear those words.

All humans have moments of sudden realization.

Did he have that realization because he was forced into a deadend situation? Or was it that he felt genuine respect?

Blood is thicker than water.

Only blood can wash away shame and hatred.

Life eventually has to end in blood.

But life also begins in blood.

Chapter 86: Washing Away One's Crimes With Blood

A broad and expansive courtyard.

This courtyard looked no different from any other wealthy family's courtyard.

But as soon as you laid foot onto the steps leading up to the grand doors, you would undoubtedly feel a gloomy sense of death.

Long Xiao4Yun had already made his way up those steps.

Everything was deathly silent in the small courtyard, not a single person could be seen. But as soon as he laid a single foot on those steps, a large group of people suddenly appeared.

Eighteen men clothed in yellow, Long Xiao4Yun had no way of seeing their faces.

But that was of no importance, he had no reason to try to differentiate between their faces - the members of the Gold Currency Union were almost all exactly alike.

They didn't have mouths, because they didn't need to speak. Even when they did speak, it was ShangGuan JinHong's voice that came out.

They didn't have eyes, because they didn't need to see. Whatever they saw was whatever ShangGuan JinHong wanted them to see.

They only had a small set of ears, because the only sound they needed to hear was ShangGuan JinHong's voice.

They didn't seem to have souls either, but that made them much quicker. In an instant they had surrounded Long Xiao4Yun.

Long Xiao4Yun took in a deep breath and said, "So it seems that the headquarters of the Golden Currency Union really is here."

"Who are you? What are you doing here?" someone said.

"I'm looking for someone." Long Xiao4Yun said.

"Who are you looking for?" someone said.

"Has your Chief ShangGuan JinHong returned yet?" Long Xiao4Yun said.

The words 'ShangGuan JinHong' seemed to have some strange hold over them, as soon as they heard it, their manners immediately changed.

"The chief has returned, you are ..."

"I want to see him, there is something that I wish to present to him." Long Xiao4Yun said.

"Please wait awhile, the Chief isn't taking visitors at the moment."

Long Xiao4Yun let out a sigh and said, "Is he inside with Li XunHuan at the moment?"

"Yes."

"Then I must see him now." Long Xiao4Yun said.

"May we know your honorable name?"

"My surname is Long, I have something extremely important to give to him right now. If you mess up this important matter, will you be able to shoulder the blame for it?"

"Your surname is Long ... are you the one who had become sworn brothers with our Chief several days ago?"

"Yes." Long XiaoYun said.

As soon as the word 'yes' had left his mouth, a cold flash of light flew by.

A single sabre and two longswords flashed towards him at the same time.

"What is the meaning of this?" Long Xiao4Yun exclaimed.

Although his voice was loud and clear, no one was listening anymore, and no one bothered to respond to him.

Long Xiao4Yun let out a roar and brandished his fists.

His martial arts were not weak, his fists were powerful and quick. A single punch carried the ferocity of a tiger.

But he only had a pair of fists.

The enemy had twenty two pairs of weapons - including hooks, twin swords, twin whips and twin brushes.

The brush was the shortest, but it was also the most dangerous. The person who wielded it was the successor of the legendary 'Life and Death Sword', a famed accupoint striking martial art. This person's ranking in the 'Book of Weapons' was definitely not lower than that of 'Rain and Wind Meteor Hammer' Xiang Song.

The sword was a 'Pine Streak' sword. Intent was hidden inside its techniques. Its moves were desperate, and its intent preceded the sword.

Among the practitioners of the sword in the world, there weren't more than ten people who were better than him.

The most vicious was the sabre.

A 'Nine-Ringed Sabre', the sound of the rings shook the soul. After seven strikes of the sabre came out, Long Xiao4Yun was caught in the cage of the sabre's wind.

The 'Judge's Brush' had also struck one of Long Xiao4Yun's accupoints.

There were no sounds of breathing, there were moans of pain.

Because his throat had been penetrated, all sounds that tried to escape were cut off.

There was only blood.

Blood shot out from his throat like an arrow.

He fell to the floor.

Blood sprayed all over his own body.

He died before he could even close his eyes.

His eyes were still staring at them, his eyeballs were protruding out.

Although he had come asking for death, why didn't they even let him see ShangGuan JinHong for just a moment?

Because 'Kill Long Xiao4Yun on sight!' was his direct order!

Because no one was allowed to set a single foot inside the courtyard!

That was also ShangGuan JinHong's decree!

ShangGuan JinHong's orders were always as firm as mountains!

The 'LianHua Compendium' fell out and was soaked red by the blood.

No one cast a single eye on it.

Who would ever be interested in the possessions of someone like Long Xiao4Yun?

So this mysterious 'LianHua Compendium' fell to the same fate as many other mystical martial arts manuals, it was lost forever.

Was this the fortune that befell the hands of man? Or was it

a misfortune?

The book was gathered along with Long Xiao4Yun's corpse and carried away.

The members of the Golden Currency Union were experts at getting rid of dead bodies. They had a very simple yet peculiar way of disposing with corpses.

Humans really were very peculiar.

They will go out of their way to the greatest lengths to obtain certain things, but when that thing is right under their noses, they would never even realize it.

Was this the foolishness of mankind? Or was it wisdom?

Ah Fei had no sword in his hand.

But that was of no importance, because he was suddenly filled with courage and confidence.

There was a bamboo forest by the side of the road, standing where he was, he could see the courtyard of the Golden Currency Union.

Ah Fei broke off one of the sticks of bamboo and split it down the middle into three pieces. He sharpened one end and wrapped a piece of cloth around the other end.

His movements were swift and accurate, he didn't waste a single ounce of energy.

His hands were very steady.

Sun XiaoHong watched quietly by his side. She found it very strange and interesting.

But she couldn't help but feel some doubt. She picked up the bamboo sword in her hand and it felt as light as a willow leaf.

She couldn't help but exclaim, "Can such a sword be enough to deal with ShangGuan JinHong?"

Chapter 87: Rebirth

Ah Fei was quiet for a few moments and then replied, "No type of sword is good enough for dealing with ShangGuan JinHong."

Sun XiaoHong thought for a second and replied, "Then ... what do we have to do to defeat him?"

Ah Fei didn't answer her.

Ah Fei knew what had to be done to defeat him but the words just wouldn't come out.

There are many words in this world that just won't come out.

Sun XiaoHong let out a sigh and said, "You're going to have to deal with a lot of other people in addition to ShangGuan JinHong as well."

"I only want to know, are you certain that ShangGuan JinHong has returned to this place?" Ah Fei asked.

"I'm pretty sure that my guesses are correct." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Why is that?" Ah Fei said.

"Because he can do anything he wants here without being seen." Sun XiaoHong said.

"To be able to defeat Li XunHuan should be a glorious thing, why would he not want anyone to see him?" Ah Fei asked.

"When a person is indulging in something that he really enjoys, he won't want to be seen by others." Sun XiaoHong said.

"I don't understand." Ah Fei said.

"What do you like to eat the most?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"I like everything just as much." Ah Fei replied.

"My favorite are walnuts, every time that I get to eat walnuts, I feel like I'm in paradise. Especially on a cold winter night, I love hiding all alone and eating walnuts." Sun XiaoHong said.

She giggled and continued, "But if there were people beside me watching as I ate, that pleasure would simply not be as great."

"You think that ShangGuan JinHong sees killing Li XunHuan as some sort of pleasure to be enjoyed?" Ah Fei said.

"That's why I'm pretty sure that ShangGuan JinHong won't be very quick to kill him." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Why is that?" Ah Fei said.

"If I only had one walnut, of course I would try to eat it as slow as possible. The slower I ate it, the longer that my pleasure will be drawn out for. Because I know it'll be somewhat difficult to bear once it is finished." Sun XiaoHong said.

That feeling was more like emptiness.

But she could never let the word 'emptiness' come out from her mouth.

She continued, "In ShangGuan JinHong's eyes, there is only one Li XunHuan in this world. And after he kills him, he will definitely have that same feeling that I have after eating my last walnut. But I'm sure that his will be much more difficult to endure."

Ah Fei slowly inserted the bamboo sword into his waist belt, he suddenly smiled and said, "I don't think it will be very hard for me to bear after I kill him."

Before those words were even finished he had already leapt away.

He didn't run very fast because he wanted to be prepared - when dealing with someone like ShangGuan JinHong, preparation was key.

As he made his way toward the courtyard, he would slowly tense his arms and legs and then slowly relax them. This was definitely a very good way to prepare himself.

He finally made his way up the steps and to the door.

Suddenly, people appeared out of nowhere - eighteen people clothed in yellow.

They were the first line of defense of the main branch of the Golden Currency Union, so of course their skills were all top-notch.

Ah Fei took in a deep breath and said, "Although I don't want to kill, I won't tolerate anyone blocking my path either."

A cold voice shouted, "I recognize you! And what if we do block your path?"

"Then you'll die!" Ah Fei said.

The voice laughed and said, "You couldn't even kill a dog!"

"I don't kill dogs, but then you're not a dog!" Ah Fei replied

There was no flash of light, because the bamboo sword didn't reflect light.

But that bamboo sword could still kill - in Ah Fei's hands it could kill!

Before that person could even finish laughing, the bamboo sword had already punctured his throat.

But now, the bamboo sword started to glisten.

It glistened with fresh blood!

A Judge's Brush, Twin Hooks, a Nine-Ringed Sabre, and five other weapons shot out at Ah Fei with great force!

Two sharp sabres swung towards the sword in his hands.

Sun XiaoHong was slightly worried, she knew that Ah Fei's battle experience wasn't very great. He was always used to facing opponents one-on-one. Rarely was he ever attacked by a large group of assailants.

His sword was fast enough to deal with a single opponent, but was it fast enough to deal with so many at once?

Sun XiaoHong wanted to rush over to help him.

But before she could even move, she saw three people fall to the ground.

She could've sworn that the twin sabres had cut into the bamboo sword but for some reason Ah Fei wasn't the one who fell to the ground!

Only the person wielding the Judge's Brush knew the reason behind this.

His accupoint striking technique was always accurate, and it was always extremely forceful. Even he thought that he had landed a hit on Ah Fei.

But as soon as the brush in his hands was about to hit Ah Fei, he suddenly felt all his strength disappear.

The bamboo sword had already penetrated into his throat.

Ah Fei wasn't that much faster than him, but he was faster by an instant.

But that single instant was all that it took.

Sun XiaoHong finally threw herself into the battle. Her body fluttered about like a graceful butterfly.

Among the female experts in the realm, there were many who were skilled in lightness and hidden projectiles, disciplines which required little skill and strength. It was very rare to see a female expert who had deep internal

energy and powerful palm strikes.

Sun XiaoHong was not an exception.

Her hidden weapons were shot out extremely fast, but her movements were even faster. The positions of her steps were strange and complex, it made her almost impossible to catch.

She still believed that Ah Fei's sword was only meant for attacking a single opponent and was inadequate for dealing with groups.

The way that Ah Fei used his sword was very unique. It was completely different from every school of swordsmanship.

Because his moves didn't contain any slashes or strikes, only thrusts.

And thrusts could only thrust forward.

But for some reason Ah Fei was able to thrust in every direction, and he could thrust from any position!

His thrusts could originate from his chest, his legs, or even his ears!

He could thrust forward and back, and left or right!

Suddenly, a person rolled towards him from behind, as a flurry of blades flew out.

A 'Ground-Riding Sabre'!

This sabre technique was extremely difficult to master, but if one was able to master it, its power was immeasurable.

But Ah Fei seemingly had eyes in the back of his head. He dodged a spear that shot towards him, and released a backhanded thrust from below his waist and struck the 'Ground-Riding Sabre' practitioner in the throat!

At that instant, another person flew out from behind the spear user. With a weapon in each hand, he unleashed a move called 'Pushing Forth the Mountain' towards Ah Fei. His moves were peculiar and his weapons were even more peculiar.

His weapons were a pair of 'Phoenix Wing Golden Cudgels'.

This type of weaponry was extremely rare, the club was lined with spikes. Although one would normally push the clubs at an enemy, one could also lift and impale an enemy on its end at the same time.

Anyone unlucky enough to be struck by its attack would immediately be torn to pieces.

Ah Fei should have leapt backwards to avoid the attack.

But if he did, he would've lost the initiative and several other weapons might have taken his life!

Yet he couldn't attack head-on either, the 'Phoenix Wing Golden Cudgels' would've ripped him apart.

This was obvious to any observer.

But just as it seemed that Ah Fei was at a loss over what to do, his body suddenly leapt up into the air.

Sun XiaoHong caught a glimpse of him in the corner of her

eye and let out a silent gasp.

In that exact moment, Ah Fei's sword thrust downwards from his legs. The twin cudgels struck upwards at the same time.

CHI, the tip of his sword slid itself into his opponent's throat.

The 'Phoenix Wing Golden Cudgels' were inches away from Ah Fei's chest. But the person wielding them suddenly felt a strange sensation in his throat as he collapsed to the floor. Even with all his strength he couldn't push the cudgels upwards another inch.

His eyeballs almost jumped out of their sockets as he felt himself losing all control over the muscles in his body. Everything from his legs down suddenly felt cold as feces and urine gushed out from his bowels. His legs buckled as he crumbled to the floor.

Only a terrified look of surprise remained on his face.

He just couldn't believe that there existed such a swift and precise sword in this world.

But now, there was no way that he could deny it!

Suddenly, silence blanketed every direction, no one made another move.

Everyone just stared blankly at the gruesome death that befell the 'Phoenix Wing Golden Cudgels' expert. Everyone smelled the foul odor that emanated from his body.

Some people had the unstoppable urge to vomit when their

stomachs started to turn.

But these people didn't throw up because of the foul smell, rather they threw up because of fear. It was as if they had just discovered how horrifying and disgusting 'death' could be.

It wasn't that they were afraid of death, it was just that dying in this manner was simply unbearable.

Ah Fei didn't make another move either, he made his way out of the crowd of people.

There were nine of them left and all their eyes were focused on Ah Fei as we walked past them.

One of them suddenly bent down and threw up. Another one started to cry out loud. And yet another one fell to the ground as his body started to convulse.

One of them even turned and fled to the nearest toilet.

And how could Sun XiaoHong not want to vomit and cry also? Not only did her heart fill with fear, but sadness as well. She just couldn't comprehend how human life could suddenly become so worthless and despicable.

Ah Fei simply walked forward, with sword in hand.

Drops of blood dripped down from the tip.

This sword not only could rob a person of his life, but also strip a person of his dignity.

The sword was really that ruthless!

But what about the swordsman?

A large door met him at the end of the path.

The door was shut tight. It was bound from the inside as well.

This was ShangGuan JinHong's private quarters. He was waiting inside, as was Li XunHuan.

ShangGuan JinHong hadn't come out yet, which must have meant that Li XunHuan hadn't died yet either.

Sun XiaoHong was filled with glee as she rushed over to the front of the door.

But suddenly her entire body stiffened up!

The door was made of iron and at least a foot thick. No one in the entire world could ever knock it down.

And of course ShangGuan JinHong wouldn't conveniently open the door from the inside either.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly started to feel dizzy, as if she had just stepped on air and was about to fall into a bottomless abyss!

She couldn't stand up anymore as she collapsed onto the door and burst out in tears.

Her plan had been foiled. All of her efforts were completely wasted.

It would have been better if something had went wrong in the beginning. But to come so close and then having your hopes crushed was simply heart-wrenching.

This kind of disappointment was the most difficult kind to endure.

Ah Fei who had been standing quietly suddenly started to scream like a wild beast as he charged at full speed at the iron door.

He bounced off and fell to the floor as he hit the door. But Ah Fei suddenly got up again and thrust forward with his sword at the door with all his strength.

The bamboo sword snapped.

No sword in the world could have penetrated this iron door, much less a sword made out of bamboo!

Chapter 88: Victory and Defeat

Ah Fei's legs buckled as he fell to the floor and started to twitch. He suddenly felt as if they no longer had any alternatives, it was a feeling that always drove him insane.

But it was useless for him to throw a fit right now.

Li XunHuan was behind these iron doors slowly being tortured with the agony of death.

And all they could do was wait helplessly from the outside.

But what exactly were they waiting for? Were they waiting for ShangGuan JinHong to open those doors?

The moment that ShangGuan JinHong stepped out of those doors would mean that Li XunHuan was no longer alive.

What exactly were they waiting for? They were only waiting for certain death.

There was no way that ShangGuan JinHong would spare their lives. The moment that ShangGuan JinHong stepped out of those doors would also be the moment that guaranteed their deaths.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly rushed over and tried to pull Ah Fei to his feet.

"Hurry up and escape." Sun XiaoHong said.

"You're ... you're telling me to run?" Ah Fei said.

"There's nothing else that you can do right now, I ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Then what about you?" Ah Fei said.

Sun XiaoHong bit down on her lips and thought for a long while before lowering her head and said, "But I'm different from you."

"Different?" Ah Fei said.

"I've already decided a long time ago that if he were to die, I wouldn't live on alone without him. But you ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"I don't intend on accompanying him in death." Ah Fei said.

"Then that's why you should run." Sun XiaoHong said.

"I don't intend on running either." Ah Fei said.

"But why?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"You should know why." Ah Fei said.

"I understand that you'd want to avenge his death, but it doesn't have to be now. You could always wait ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"I don't intend on waiting." Ah Fei said.

"But if you can't wait then ... then ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Then what?" Ah Fei said.

Sun XiaoHong's lips had already started to bleed.

"Then you can only die!" she exclaimed.

Ah Fei stared at the stains of blood on his bamboo sword.

The blood had already dried.

"I know that you're going to want to try nonetheless, but it will really be useless." Sun XiaoHong said.

"And what use can come out of you staying here to die with him?" Ah Fei said.

Sun XiaoHong could not think of an answer.

"You are staying here because there are some things that you know will be useless if done, yet for some reason you can't avoid doing them anyway." Ah Fei said.

Sun XiaoHong finally let out a long sigh and said, "You're starting to sound more and more like him."

Ah Fei was silent as he slowly nodded his head.

He admitted it, there was no way that he could deny it.

Anyone who encountered Li XunHuan couldn't help but be affected by his immense selflessness.

If he hadn't met Li XunHuan, Ah Fei would have probably lost faith in humanity a long time ago.

"Never trust anyone, and never accept kindness from anyone; else your life will be filled with suffering."

Ah Fei's mother had to endure an entire life of sadness and misfortune. Not once had he ever seen her smile. She died when he was still very young, most probably because she had already lost all hope in life.

"I've wronged you, I really should've waited until you've become a man to leave this world. But I just can't wait any longer. I'm just so extremely tired ... I'm sorry I can't leave anything for you, just these few simple words. I had to suffer an entire lifetime to learn them, so please never forget them."

Ah Fei never forgot his mother's words.

When he left the wilderness and made his way into civilization, it wasn't because he was seeking a better life. Rather, he wanted to reap vengeance on humanity for what his mother had to suffer.

But the very first person that he encountered happened to be Li XunHuan.

Li XunHuan made him realize that life wasn't just full of pain and suffering. Li XunHuan also made him realize that death wasn't as ugly and repulsive as he had thought. He happened to learn a lot from Li XunHuan.

He originally never believed that morals and virtues could exist in this world.

But Li XunHuan really had an immense influence on his life, even moreso than his mother had.

Because what Li XunHuan preached was 'love', not hatred.

Love will always be much easier to accept than hatred.

But now, he just couldn't hold in those flames of hate!

Hatred bred in him a desire to destroy, to destroy others, to destroy himself, and to destroy everything.

He really felt that life was too unfair, that someone like Li XunHuan had to die like this.

Sun XiaoHong let out a sorrowful sigh and said, "If ShangGuan JinHong knew that we were just standing outside waiting for him, he must be extremely happy."

Ah Fei gritted his teeth and shouted, "Then let him be happy! Only the good in this world are left to suffer anyway, happiness is always rewarded to those that are evil!"

Suddenly a voice shouted out loud.

"You're wrong!"

Although those iron doors were extremely heavy, they didn't make a single noise when they were being opened.

That is why no one knew just when those doors had opened.

A person slowly walked out from those doors ... it was Li XunHuan!

He looked extremely tired and worn out, but he was alive.

The only thing that mattered was that he was alive!

Ah Fei and Sun XiaoHong just stared at him in disbelief, tears started streaming down their faces.

They were tears of joy. In happiness and in sadness, with the exception of tears, there was really nothing that needed to be said, there was nothing that needed to be done. Not one of them even moved a muscle.

Li XunHuan's eyes were brimming with warm tears as well. With a smile on his face he said, "You're wrong. The good people in this world will never suffer in quiet despair. And the pain suffered by evil will always outweigh their happiness."

Sun XiaoHong stumbled over to him, fell into his chest and started sobbing unceasingly.

She just couldn't stop crying for joy.

After a long while, Ah Fei let out a sigh and seemingly couldn't hold it in anymore.

"Where is ShangGuan JinHong?"

Li XunHuan softly caressed Sun XiaoHong's hair as he replied, "He must be suffering right now because he happened to make one mistake!"

"What mistake did he make?" Ah Fei asked.

"Indeed, he had many chances to kill me. He really could've forced me into a situation where I couldn't even defend myself. But he let the opportunity pass." Li XunHuan said.

But for someone like ShangGuan JinHong, why would he willingly give up an opportunity like that?

Sun XiaoHong couldn't help but ask either, "Why was that?"

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "Because he wanted to take a gamble."

A spark suddenly shot into Sun XiaoHong's eyes as she said, "He must've not believed in the saying that 'Little Li's flying dagger, once released never misses its target!'"

"He didn't believe it - he didn't trust anyone, there was not a single thing in the entire world that he trusted." Li XunHuan said.

"And the result?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

"He was defeated!" Li XunHuan said.

He was defeated!

These were three simple words.

Victory and defeat was something that was decided in an instant.

But to imagine just how intense, just how grand that one instant must have been!

That one instant would have immense consequences on the martial arts world.

That single flash of light must have been frightening! Yet magnificent at the same time!

Sun XiaoHong's only regret was to not have been able to witness what had happened in that single instant!

She didn't even have to see it with her own eyes. Just thinking about it made her short of breath!

Shooting stars were also just as splendid and beautiful.

Shooting stars streaked through the dark night in a burst of light that could cause people to get excited in just the same way.

But a shooting star couldn't even compare to the resplendence of that single flash of light.

The radiance of a shooting star was short lived.

But the brilliance of his blade would shine for all eternity!

The door had already been opened.

No one could keep the entire world separated any longer.

If you wanted to cut yourself off from the rest of the world, you must have been rejected by the world in the first place!

Ah Fei walked through those doors.

The first thing that caught his eye was the dagger, that mysterious dagger.

Little Li's Flying Dagger!

The dagger was not protruding from ShangGuan JinHong's throat, but it was enough to take his life!

The blade of dagger had entered his Adam's apple through the collarbone and was slanted upwards. The dagger must have been released from an extremely low angle.

The look of fear and disbelief on his face was the same as the expression on the faces of those whom he had killed before.

All life was created equal. Especially in the face of death, we are all equals. But some people only comprehend this when the final result has already been determined.

ShangGuan JinHong's face was full of surprise, doubt, and disbelief.

He was the same as everyone else, he just couldn't believe that the dagger was that fast!

Even Ah Fei had a hard time believing that it was so, he really couldn't imagine just how that dagger was released.

He wanted desperately for Li XunHuan to explain in details everything that had occurred but he knew that Li XunHuan wouldn't say a word.

The brilliance of that single instant, the speed of his dagger, were simply things that couldn't be described.

"He was defeated!"

ShangGuan JinHong's fists were still clenched as if he was grasping on to something, was he still unwilling to believe what had happened?

It's unfortunate that he will never be able to grasp onto anything again.

Ah Fei suddenly felt extremely gloomy, as if he could really sympathize with this person. Even he had no idea why he felt this way.

Perhaps it wasn't ShangGuan JinHong that he sympathized with, but himself.

Because he was human. ShangGuan JinHong was also human. All humans had similar instances of sadness and suffering.

Although he hadn't been defeated, just what exactly was he grasping onto? Just what exactly had he gained?

After a long while Ah Fei finally turned his head.

And what met his gaze was Jing WuMing.

It appeared as if Jing WuMing hadn't even noticed anyone coming in. Although he was standing idly behind Ah Fei the entire time, it was as if he stood in a completely different world.

Although his eyes were set on ShangGuan JinHong, he was really staring at himself.

ShangGuan JinHong's life was his life, he was ShangGuan JinHong's image.

When life had already disappeared, how could the image still remain?

No matter what, whenever Jing WuMing stood nearby, everyone would always feel a dreadful killer's aura enveloping them from all sides.

But now, that aura was nowhere to be found.

When Ah Fei stepped into that room, he didn't even notice that another soul was inside.

Although he was still alive, all that was left an empty shell. He was like a sword that had lost its edge, completely without purpose.

Ah Fei couldn't help but sigh inwardly, he understood very well how Jing WuMing must have felt.

Because he had experienced that very same feeling before.

After some time, Jing WuMing walked over and lifted ShangGuan JinHong's corpse with his hands.

He still hadn't laid an eye on anyone else as he slowly walked towards the door.

"You don't want to seek revenge?" Ah Fei said.

Jing WuMing didn't turn around, his steps didn't slow down either.

Ah Fei laughed coldly, "Are you afraid?"

Jing WuMing suddenly stopped in place.

"There is still a sword at your waist, why are you afraid to take it out? Unless that sword of yours is only there for show?" Ah Fei said.

Jing WuMing suddenly turned around.

The corpse dropped to the floor, the sword flew out from his waist!

The sword flashed, and shot straight towards Ah Fei's throat!

He was still incredibly fast, just as fast as he was before. But for some reason when his sword was within about half a foot of its target, the bamboo sword in Ah Fei's had already reached his throat!

Ah Fei had made three bamboo swords, this was the second one.

He looked at Jing WuMing and slowly said, "You are still extremely fast, but you can no longer kill. Do you know why?"

Jing WuMing lowered his sword.

"Because you desire death more than your opponent. That is why you will never be able to kill." Ah Fei said.

Jing WuMing's normally lifeless eyes suddenly lit up with incredible sorrow. After a long while, he finally responded, "Yes."

"I can kill you." Ah Fei said.

"Yes." Jing WuMing replied.

"But I won't kill you." Ah Fei said.

"You won't kill me?" Jing WuMing asked.

"I won't kill you, precisely because you are Jing WuMing!" Ah Fei said.

Jing WuMing's face suddenly twitched.

These were the exact same words that he had said to Ah Fei during their first encounter. But today, his words had suddenly turned into Ah Fei's words.

He pondered maliciously about those words. A flame seemingly ignited in his eyes, like a pile of ashes that had suddenly caught fire again.

Ah Fei looked at him and said, "You can leave now."

"Leave ... ?" Jing WuMing said.

"You once gave me a chance. Now I'm giving you a chance as well ... your very last chance." Ah Fei said.

He watched as Jing WuMing made his way out, a strange feeling swelled up inside of him.

"A tooth for a tooth, blood repaid with blood."

What Jing WuMing had once given him, he now repaid in full.

When a person's heart had already died, there are only two things that can keep that person alive.

One of them is love, and the other is hatred.

Ah Fei was able to keep living because of love. And now, he wanted to prolong Jing WuMing's life through hatred.

But truly, he just wanted for Jing WuMing to live on.

If this was really vengeance, it would be the most selfless kind of vengeance possible. If all vengeance was carried out like this, the history of mankind would have been much brighter. Mankind would undoubtedly be able to live on forever.

No matter what, vengeance was always very satisfying.

But was Ah Fei really that delighted right now?

He just felt tired, so very tired ... the sword in his hands had already fallen to the ground.

Sun XiaoHong had been watching quietly the entire time. Only now did she finally dare to utter a sigh of relief.

"It is extremely easy to kill someone, but extremely difficult to convince them to live on."

Those words were Li XunHuan's words.

No matter who or what the situation was, the method that he always approached with was love, not hatred. Because he knew that hatred could only bring about destruction. Love had the power to give life throughout eternity.

His love would forever be that broad, his personality would forever be that selfless.

Sun XiaoHong suddenly realized that Ah Fei had become exactly like him.

She couldn't help but glance over at him.

Li XunHuan appeared to be worn out and tired as well, so

much so that he couldn't even say a single word.

She stared at him for a long while before finally smiling and said, "You two have just defeated the two best fighters in the entire world. The most powerful union in all the land has just been dismantled in your hands. You two should be extremely overjoyed, but there isn't a single trace of happiness on your faces. It's as if the two of you are the ones who have just lost."

Chapter 89: Epilogue

Li XunHuan was quiet for a long while before letting out a sigh as he said slowly, "When a person is victorious, he will always feel extremely tired and lonesome."

"Why is that?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Because he has succeeded, he has completed all his goals. There will be nothing left for him to look forward to. But the one who suffered defeat would actually be driven to work even harder than before." Li XunHuan said.

Sun XiaoHong bit down on her lips and said, "Then the taste of victory isn't very sweet, is it?"

Li XunHuan fell silent for a while before he let out a smile and said, "Although victory is somewhat difficult to endure, at the very least its much better than defeat."

Success and victory can never really bring satisfaction, nor can it really bring happiness.

True happiness can only be experienced during the struggles that you encounter throughout your life.

If you've been fortunate enough to experience that kind of happiness, then your life hasn't been lived in vain.

Pavilions were always the place where people met to say

their farewells. Parting always brought about a melancholy mood.

Therefore, just the mention of the word 'pavilion' carried a subtle sense of unhappiness.

The rain had subsided, the grass and weeds were disheveled.

Outside of the pavilion by the side of the road was a young couple saying their farewells.

A heroic boy, a passionate girl. They were obviously in love. He really should stay and enjoy the happiness of youth. Why was he so intent on leaving?

There was a sword by his side, but no sword no matter how sharp could sever the bond of youthful love and longing. His eyes were red as if tears had already been shed.

"You've accompanied me thus far already, just go back now."

The girl lowered her head and asked, "When will you return?"

"I don't know, in a year or two, perhaps ..." the boy replied.

The girl's tears started to stream down her cheeks as she said, "Why must you make me wait that long? Why must you go for?"

The boy straightened up his posture and said, "I've already told you before, I want to find and defeat every single one of them!"

His gaze focused into the distance and brightness emanated

from his eyes as he continued, "The people listed in the 'Book of Weapons', ShangGuan JinHong, Li XunHuan, Guo Songyang, Lu FengXian ... I want everyone to know that I'm even stronger than all of them, and after that ..."

"And after that, then what? We're already so happy right now. After you've defeated all of them, will we really be that much happier?" the girl pleaded.

"Maybe we won't be, but nonetheless it is something that I must do!" the boy said.

"Why?" the girl asked.

"Because I can't just spend half my life meaninglessly like this. I want to make a name for myself. I want to become just as famous as ShangGuan JinHong and Li XunHuan. In fact, I know for sure that I can succeed!" the boy said.

He clenched his fists tightly. He really was that resolute and determined.

The girl looked at him admiringly, her eyes carried an inexhaustible tenderness and warmth. Finally, she sighed and softly said, "I know that you can succeed as well. No matter how long you'll be gone for, I'll always be here waiting for you."

Their hearts filled with the sorrow of parting, but also with the anticipation of happiness that was to come.

Of course the two of them wouldn't notice anyone else.

Underneath the forest, there were two people staring intently at them.

When the boy finally took the first big stride on the road that lay before him, Sun XiaoHong let out a sigh and said, "If only he knew of the fate that befell ShangGuan JinHong, I'm afraid he wouldn't be as quick to leave his sweetheart ..."

What happens when a person finally does a make a name for themselves?

Sun XiaoHong looked towards Li XunHuan with tears in her eyes as she continued, "He wants to be just as famous as you, but you ... are you really that much happier than him? I think ... I think that if you were in his shoes, you wouldn't have done the same thing."

Li XunHuan's eyes were still fixed on that boy's figure as it disappeared into the distance as he said, "If I were him, I would've done the exact same thing."

"You ..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"People must have goals and ambition, sometimes we have to abandon everything else and chase them with a purpose. Regardless of the outcome, whether it be success or happiness, it doesn't really matter." Li XunHuan said.

A proud smile broke from the corners of his lips as his eyes filled with brightness and said, "Some people will think that this is foolish, but without that type of mindset, what would our world be like?"

Sun XiaoHong's eyes suddenly filled with the same kind of tenderness and admiration that the young girl had shown. She, like the young girl by the pavilion, felt extremely proud of her man.

Ah Fei who had been standing in the distance slowly started

to walk towards them.

But Sun XiaoHong still held on tightly to Li XunHuan's hand, she didn't let go. She was not ashamed, she felt that her affection was not something that she needed to hide.

In fact, she would've gladly announced her affection to the entire world if she could.

"I don't think that she will come." Ah Fei said.

They were planning to meet Lin ShiYin here.

They knew nothing of what had happened between Lin ShiYin and Long Xiao4Yun. Just like how that young boy knew nothing of the fate that befell ShangGuan JinHong.

There are some things that are better left unknown.

As soon as she thought of Lin ShiYin, Sun XiaoHong's grip unknowingly started to loosen.

But she immediately held on tightly, even more tightly than before, as she replied, "She agreed to meet me here, I'm sure that she will come."

"She won't come!" Ah Fei said.

"Why?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Because she knows herself that there's no need for her to come." Ah Fei said.

Sun XiaoHong was the one who had asked the question, but when Ah Fei answered, his eyes were looking at Li XunHuan.

Li XunHuan didn't let go of Sun XiaoHong's hand either.

In the past, whenever he heard someone mentioning Lin ShiYin's name, he would always feel an indescribable pressure and sadness, as if his entire body had been locked down by shackles.

He had always carried that burden of sadness with him.

But now, that sadness was no longer as strong as it had once been. What exactly had set him free?

The feelings that he had for Lin ShiYin were built up over an extremely long time, so of course they would be very deep.

And although he had known Sun XiaoHong for a much shorter amount of time, the two of them had endured the most difficult of hardships and loneliness. They had braved through life and death together.

Was this kind of affection even stronger?

By then Lin ShiYin was already gone.

Ah Fei was right - she didn't come, because she didn't have to.

Long Xiao3Yun had once asked her, "Why won't you allow me to go see him just one last time?"

Lin ShiYin asked her son, "And why would you want to see him for?"

Long Xiao3Yun gritted his teeth and replied, "At the very least, I want to make it clear to him just what my father died for."

No matter what Long Xiao4Yun had done in the past, he had washed it all clean with his own blood now.

As a son, one would obviously want the world to know that.

But Lin ShiYin didn't feel the same way, as she said, "He did what he did only because he felt that it was the right thing to do. Not because he was begging for the forgiveness of others, and not because he wanted the entire world to know." she paused for a second and continued, "Not only did he repay his own debt, but he repaid our debt as well. As long as we live on happily, I'm sure that he will be able to rest in peace."

She didn't want to go see Li XunHuan because she knew that it could only result in sadness.

They didn't bother to look for Long Xiao4Yun's corpse either, because they knew that the Golden Currency Union disposed of corpses very quickly and efficiently.

If they really did go to look, all that they would find would be sadness - this was something that Sun XiaoHong knew first-hand. Her grandfather's corpse would never be found again.

There are some things in life that we simply cannot control, that no one is able to control.

Although these things were difficult to endure, we have to find ways in which to live through them, and to live past them.

They had decided to live on! Because death was not the solution to their problems - death wasn't the solution to anything.

There was another group of people saying their farewells inside the pavilion.

This time it was Ah Fei who was saying goodbye. He said that he wanted to travel the open seas to look for an herb that granted everlasting life and to look for the deity of longevity.

Of course he wasn't telling the truth, but Li XunHuan didn't bother to stop him.

Because Ah Fei's origins had always been a mystery. He never liked to talk about it even in front of Li XunHuan. But whenever Li XunHuan mentioned Shen Lan, Xiong Mao'Er, Wang LianHua, Zhu QiQi, and the heroes of the previous generation in stories and legends, his face would always light up with a very peculiar expression.

Was there some sort of relationship between Ah Fei and the heroes of the past?

Could they be the reason that he had decided to sail the open seas?

Li XunHuan didn't bother to ask.

Because he believed that a person's past was not important - humans weren't dogs, they weren't horses, pedigree was of no great importance.

Who we wanted to become was entirely up to us.

That was what was most important.

When friends part, it was common for there to be a lot of

well wishing but also a lot of sadness and emotions. But between Ah Fei and Li XunHuan, there was only well wishing, there was no sadness.

Because they knew that the other would live on happily, and that there would be plenty of chances for them to see each other again in the future.

Especially when Ah Fei saw Li XunHuan's hand, he felt even more at ease.

Li XunHuan's hand was still holding on tightly to Sun XiaoHong's hand.

That hand had wielded the dagger for way too long, that hand had held the wine glass for way too long as well. The dagger was too cold, the wine glass was too cold as well. It really deserved to enjoy the feeling of warmth by now.

What else in this world could be warmer than your lover's hand?

Ah Fei knew that Sun XiaoHong would appreciate that hand more than anyone else. Although that hand still bore the scars of battles fought, they would definitely heal over time.

As for himself, of course he had his own scars.

But he didn't wanted to mention it anymore.

"The past is the past ..."

This phrase seems really simple at first glance, but the number of people who were able to do such a thing were not many.

But both Li XunHuan and Ah Fei were able to completely let go of the past.

"In three years, I'll definitely return." Ah Fei suddenly said.

He looked at their hands and smiled, "When I return, the two of you better take me out for some wine."

"Well that's a given, but it's a pity that three years is such a long time." Li XunHuan said.

"But the wine that I want to drink is very unique, I wonder if the two of you will be willing to treat me to some?" Ah Fei said.

"What kind of wine do you want to drink?" Sun XiaoHong asked.

"Of course that would be a wedding toast." Ah Fei replied.

A wedding toast, of course that would be a wedding toast.

Because it was the wine that was toasted at a wedding, it would need three years time - three years more than enough time to mourn for her grandfather.

Sun XiaoHong's face started to blush.

"I've tasted every type of wine except for this one, I only hope that the two of you will not disappoint me." Ah Fei said.

Sun XiaoHong's face turned even redder. She lowered her head, but couldn't help but secretly glance over at Li XunHuan.

The expression on Li XunHuan's face was very peculiar. The

words 'wedding wine' seemingly caught him off guard. After a long pause, he said, "I've invited people to drink every kind of wine before, but never have I invited anyone for wedding wine. Do you know why?"

Of course Ah Fei knew why, but Li XunHuan didn't want him to answer.

So Li XunHuan answered for himself, "Wedding wine is simply too costly."

"Too costly?" Ah Fei said.

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "Because when a man offers to treat others to wedding wine, he is admitting that he is willing to slowly pay off a certain debt for the rest of his life. Unfortunately, I'm not one who likes to disappoint his friends."

With a gentle cry, Sun XiaoHong threw herself into his chest.

Ah Fei let out a laugh.

He hadn't laughed like that in a very long time.

With that one laugh, he suddenly felt much younger. He suddenly felt himself surge with courage and confidence. He suddenly felt a rekindled hope in all of humanity.

Even a withered piece of lumber was full of life in his eyes. Because he knew that out of that dead log would come renewed life, after some time a young tree would definitely sprout.

He never realized just how powerful a simple 'laugh' really was.

Not only did he admire Li XunHuan, he was very grateful as well. Because it was not easy for someone to let out a laugh that they had held in for such a long time. But if you were able to bring laughter to others, then that was even more incredible.

'Drawing feet on a snake', not only was that gesture a superfluous one, it was very silly as well.

But there is already so much discontent in this world, why not help by trying to add a little laughter?

Laughter, was like perfume, not only did it make oneself pleasant, it made others happy as well.

What's wrong with acting a little foolishly if it could bring out laughter in others?